

Fall 2008

# Teaching toward understanding: Feminist rhetorical theories and pedagogies in the college composition classroom

Alison A. Knoblauch  
*University of New Hampshire, Durham*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation>

---

## Recommended Citation

Knoblauch, Alison A., "Teaching toward understanding: Feminist rhetorical theories and pedagogies in the college composition classroom" (2008). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 445.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/445>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [nicole.hentz@unh.edu](mailto:nicole.hentz@unh.edu).

**TEACHING TOWARD UNDERSTANDING: FEMINIST  
RHETORICAL THEORIES AND PEDAGOGIES IN THE  
COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM**

BY

ALISON A. KNOBLAUCH  
B.A. in English, Northland College, 1999  
M.A. in English, University of New Hampshire, 2001

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire  
In Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
In  
English

September, 2008

UMI Number: 3333522

## INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

**UMI**<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3333522

Copyright 2008 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC  
789 E. Eisenhower Parkway  
PO Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

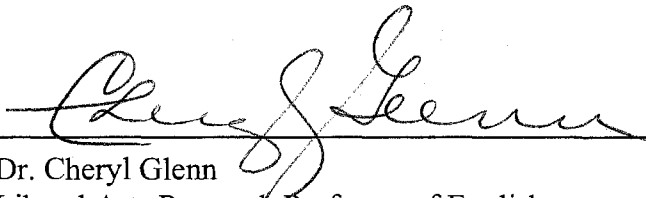
This dissertation has been examined and approved.



Dissertation Director, Dr. Jessica Enoch  
Assistant Professor of English  
The University of Pittsburgh



Dr. Jennifer Borda  
Assistant Professor of Communication



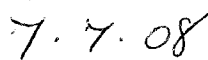
Dr. Cheryl Glenn  
Liberal Arts Research Professor of English  
The Pennsylvania State University



Dr. Lisa MacFarlane  
Interim Vice Provost  
Professor of English and American Studies



Dr. Thomas Newkirk  
Professor of English



Date

## **DEDICATION**

For my husband, who has been unfailingly patient and supportive. And for the rest of my family—you know who you are.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a dissertation can be a lonely and isolating experience—or so I’ve been told. I count myself lucky to have been surrounded and supported by friends and family during this process. I would like to take a moment to thank some of the people who have contributed to the completion of this dissertation. First, however, I must thank the Graduate School at the University of New Hampshire for awarding me a Dissertation Fellowship; it provided me much needed time and financial support to complete my dissertation. I also would like to thank the many students who made this project possible.

Next, I want to thank my director, Dr. Jessica Enoch. Without Jess, this project would simply not exist. A selfless and generous mentor, Jess read draft upon draft of my dissertation while working, while pregnant, while caring for her first child. She is a remarkable teacher, mentor, and friend. I would also like to thank Dr. Thomas Newkirk for always supporting and encouraging me. It is hard for me to imagine not seeing him in the hallway everyday.

Thank you, also, to those who served on my committee. And thanks to the many people in my writing group who offered thoughtful comments on early drafts: Meagan Rodgers, Jeff Ringer, Steve Simpson, Mike Garcia, Mike Michaud, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, and Kate Tirabassi. My partners in crime at the grad carrels: Nicola Imbracsio, Mike Gutierrez, and Brian Wilkins, I will be sorely lonely working without you. Thank you, too, to Rox, Jen, and Janine for all of your help. Thanks to the members of Dissertation Bootcamp. And thanks to Nathan and Vinny at Vinny’s Coffee Cart (a.k.a.

Higher Grounds)—I'm not sure I would have finished this dissertation without a near-constant supply of iced skinny milky way lattes (no whip).

Thank you, especially, to my parents, Cheryl Hicks and Bill Knoblauch; and to my siblings—Billy, Jill, and Jane. Also, Kelly Myers, Anne Bramblett and Garrett Barr, Biz Adams, Laura Smith, Laura and Emily Waldon, Leah Williams, Mike and Emily LaFiandra, Lee Feters and Lisa Arsenault, Braden Russom, Chrissy Healy, Jess Gisi, the DePalma clan, Cara Snider, Meredith Hall, and the many others I'm surely (and regrettably) forgetting. And, of course, to Tim Fitzmaurice who unselfishly got a job outside of Ham Smith so I could actually get this dissertation done.

Finally, to my husband, who never lost faith, never lost confidence, never lost patience. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	ix

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction.....	1
Major Chapters and Theories.....	6
Bridging the Divide: Feminist Rhetorics and Pedagogies.....	9
Framing My Teacher Research Study.....	13
Data Collection and Coding.....	18
1 Exploring Argument: Definitions, Responses, Alternatives.....	25
Surveying Argument Textbooks.....	28
Feminist Responses to Argument.....	37
A Number of Alternatives.....	45
Three Popular Alternatives.....	50
2 I Invite You to Consider: Invitational Rhetoric and Pedagogy.....	66
Defining Invitational Rhetoric.....	70
Critiques of Invitational Rhetoric.....	79
Intention and Reception in Invitational Rhetoric.....	84
Invitational Rhetoric and Pedagogy in the Writing Classroom.....	89



	Invitational Rhetoric and the " <i>Black Betty</i> " Controversy.....	98
3	Pausing to Reflect on Rhetorical Listening as Theory and Pedagogy.....	109
	Defining Rhetorical Listening.....	113
	Understanding "Understanding".....	117
	Holding and Being Held Accountable.....	119
	Identification, Disidentification, and Non-Identification.....	122
	Cultural Logics.....	126
	Rhetorical Listening: Contributions and Questions.....	127
	Listening Pedagogically: A Pedagogy of Rhetorical Listening.....	132
	A Pedagogy of Rhetorical Listening.....	139
	The Campus Issue Project.....	144
	Rhetorical Listening in Classroom Conversation.....	153
4	Body of Knowledge: Embodied Writing, Embodied Pedagogy.....	160
	Embodied Language.....	167
	Embodied Response.....	173
	Embodied Rhetoric.....	178
	The Embodied Classroom.....	190
	Notes Toward an Embodied Pedagogy.....	194
	Common Confusion.....	198
	An Attempt to Model Embodied Rhetoric in the Classroom.....	205
	Embodied Assignments and Student Writing.....	211
5	Coda: Failure to Communicate.....	221
	Notes.....	232

Works Cited.....	242
Appendix.....	253

## ABSTRACT

### TEACHING TOWARD UNDERSTANDING: FEMINIST RHETORICAL THEORIES AND PEDAGOGIES IN THE COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

Alison A. Knoblauch

University of New Hampshire, September, 2008

While recognizing the value of traditional argument, many teacher-scholars have begun to challenge the primacy of antagonistic debate in college classrooms. In “Teaching Toward Understanding: Feminist Rhetorical Theories and Pedagogies in the College Composition Classroom,” I maintain that the inclusion of invitational rhetoric, embodied rhetoric, and rhetorical listening as classroom content, coupled with the translation of these theories into pedagogical practice, can both challenge and expand current approaches to the teaching of writing and rhetoric. Furthermore, by offering alternatives to antagonistic debate, these rhetorical theories encourage productive and ethical forms of discourse, promoting more successful cross-cultural communication both in the classroom and in the larger civic realm.

## INTRODUCTION

Turn on the television, open up the editorial section of a newspaper, or eavesdrop on the conversations around the water cooler at work and you're likely to find evidence of debate: people choosing opposite sides, opposing viewpoints, and defending them vehemently. Debate is all around us, from political campaigns to talk radio and television. In fact, debate is so prevalent in this country that linguist Deborah Tannen has dubbed ours an "argument culture." Tannen defines the argument culture as one that "urges us to approach the world—and the people in it— in an adversarial frame of mind. It rests on the assumption that opposition is the best way to get anything done" (3). She goes on to explain that the argument culture functions as battle, as war, pitting one side against the other, and, in doing so, reifies not only the polarized viewpoints, but polarity itself.

This is not to say that debate itself is problematic. In fact, debate is a necessary and useful component of democracy and social discourse. What Tannen objects to is the ubiquity and primacy of the argument culture. Tannen explains that we should not "put aside the argument model of public discourse entirely" but need, instead, to "rethink whether this is the *only* way or *always* the best way, to carry out our affairs" (26 emphasis in original).

Tannen's argument culture can also be found in first-year writing classrooms, or at least in the textbooks marketed toward them. As I will illustrate in Chapter 1, most of these argument textbooks (including popular texts such as Nancy Wood's *Elements of Argument*, Faigley and Selzer's *Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments*, and *The*

*Uses of Argument* by Stephen Toulmin) focus almost solely on attempts at persuasion, glossing over or ignoring alternative forms of argument, such as dialogue, deliberation, negotiation, or Rogerian argument. Of course arguing effectively is an essential skill for students to master. But, given our culture's penchant for the dualistic debate format, I have to wonder if our focus on debate in the classroom is not perpetuating forms of interaction that favor mastery, persuasion, and control thereby leaving students ill-prepared to negotiate difference in ways that lead toward communication and understanding.

A number of feminist teacher-scholars have expressed similar concerns about the teaching of argument in college composition classrooms. Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin, for example, believe that by privileging persuasion, traditional forms of rhetoric and argument perpetuate patriarchal values of dominance, change, and control over others. Catherine Lamb also seeks an alternative to what she calls "monologic argument," which she defines as a form of argument in which rhetors work only toward their own goals, seeking usually to simply refute the opposition (283). Yet Susan Jarratt worries that avoiding traditional argument in the classroom means instructors "spend too little time helping their students learn how to argue about public issues," thereby making it difficult for these students to effect real social change (277). Nancy Welch, too, conveys her concern that the avoidance of oppositional argument in favor of consensus or mediation can bar women from "public voice and participation" (154).

This project is an attempt to speak back to this conversation by asking not whether or not we should teach traditional argument in composition classrooms, but to "rethink whether this is the *only* way or *always* the best way, to carry out our affairs"

(Tannen 26). Stemming in part from my concern over what seems to be a tendency to favor debate—what I will call antagonistic approaches to argument—in college composition classrooms, *Teaching Toward Understanding* imagines productive supplements to traditional approaches to argument.<sup>i</sup>

Let me be clear: I am not asking that teachers *disregard* traditional theories of argument and persuasion. Like Susan Jarratt, I believe that students must be well versed in the art of persuasion in order to effect change in the civic realm. Instead, I am advocating an *expansion* of classroom content and practice to include alternatives to debate and persuasion, opening up the possibility of forms of communication that speak to feminist critiques of traditional argument. My project, then, addresses the following questions: How might alternative modes of argument impact the ways we approach argument in the college composition classroom? How might they impact the kinds of discourse we ask students to practice and produce? How might they influence ways of knowing and meaning-making for both instructors and students? More specifically, how might these alternative theories impact my own teaching practices? In other words, how might I construct pedagogical practice that is rooted in these theories, and what might such a practice look like? What might it accomplish? What problems might it cause?

Perhaps not surprisingly, the alternatives I explore in this project are drawn from feminist rhetorical theory. Because feminist rhetorical theorists are concerned with issues of language and power, such theories seem well suited to a college composition classroom—a space in which students and instructors also grapple with issues of language and power. The three theories I investigate—invitational rhetoric, rhetorical listening, and embodied rhetoric—pay close attention to the impact of language practices

of both rhetor and audience, especially when trying to communicate across difference. All three theories also look to alternatives to the argument culture, forwarding communicative practices that function outside of oppositional frameworks.

But it is not enough to simply import these theories into a writing classroom as content. Theory must be lived, practiced. In her 1994 book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks explains that “reinforcing the idea that there is a split between theory and practice” denies “the power of liberatory education for critical consciousness, thereby perpetuating conditions that reinforce our collective exploitation and repression” (69). For hooks, theory must come from lived experience, from testifying. But it is clear that the inverse can also be true. Hooks emphasizes that there need not, in fact should not, be a split between theory and practice. To divorce one from the other denies the possibility of change, of transformation, liberation. And so as I encountered these theories that, to me, spoke back to the argument culture, I wondered how I might connect them to practice. How might they influence my teaching? How might that influence help me work toward transformation in the classroom? In other words, given my own attempts to enact a self-reflexive feminist pedagogy, one that interrogated issues of authority, power, and difference in the classroom, how might these theories impact my classroom practice, particularly given their own attention to issues of authority, power, and difference?

In an attempt to address these questions, I examine the ways in which argument is taught in college composition classes, engaging critiques of traditional approaches made by feminist scholars such as Suzanne Clark, Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin, and Catherine Lamb. I offer three feminist rhetorical theories—invitational rhetoric, rhetorical listening,

and embodied rhetoric—as ways to expand our notion of argument in the classroom. Further, I connect theory to practice by constructing pedagogies rooted in these three theories, exploring how they encourage both teachers and students to work toward not only mastery and control (as is often the case with traditional forms of argument and persuasion), but also communication and a recognition of difference.

I am not, however, simply theorizing about these pedagogical practices. In order to “test” them in an actual classroom setting I developed a three-semester teacher research project. In this way I actually performed the connections between theory and practice, allowing me to demonstrate, that pedagogy, as Shari Stenberg and Amy Lee explain, is “at once concerned with how knowledge is produced through specific practices and processes, as well as the values and assumptions that inform those interactions” (328). Stenberg and Lee conclude that “theory and practice necessarily function in interplay, and pedagogy encompasses both” (328). Throughout my project I draw on both processes and theories, practices and values, highlighting and strengthening these connections.

In *Teaching Toward Understanding*, then, I make two major moves. First, I explore these three rhetorical theories as *content*, addressing both the contributions and critiques of each. This forms the theoretical portion of my project. Next, I discuss the results of a three-semester teacher research project in which I developed *pedagogical practices* based in these three theories. This second portion of my project is an attempt to better understand how a feminist rhetorical pedagogy contributes to feminist pedagogical practice and operationalizes alternative discourses in the college composition classroom. My overarching goal for *Teaching Toward Understanding* is to broaden the scope of



approaches to teaching argument in the college composition classroom, specifically, but not solely, in the context of feminist pedagogical practices.

### **Major Chapters and Theories**

In order to contribute to the scholarly conversation surrounding the teaching of argument in composition studies, I first must flesh out traditional approaches to teaching argument, as well as feminist responses to such approaches. In Chapter 1, “Exploring Argument: Definitions, Responses, Alternatives,” I begin this work by surveying popular college composition textbooks focused on argument, illustrating the ways in which such textbooks tend to perpetuate a definition of argument rooted in debate, persuasion, and change. I then address feminist responses to argument, paying particular attention to issues of language, power, persuasion, and control. I close the chapter by highlighting a number of popular alternatives to traditional argument, but conclude that they ultimately perpetuate many of the underlying values of traditional argument. Each of the major chapters to follow is an attempt to offer a potentially more productive alternative to traditional argument, one that challenges teacher-scholars in composition and rhetoric to re-imagine what we mean when we talk about argument in the classroom. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 each include an illustration of a pedagogy rooted in feminist rhetorical theory, highlighting how such an approach can deepen a feminist pedagogical practice.

In Chapter 2, “I Invite You to Consider,” I examine Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin’s proposal for an invitational rhetoric, which, according to the authors, is grounded in the feminist principles of “equality, immanent value, and self-determination” (4). It therefore assumes that speaker and listener are equally valuable as human beings

and are able to make decisions about their own lives. Working from these three principles, the authors suggest that while “persuasion is often necessary . . . an alternative exists that may be used when changing and controlling others is not the rhetor’s goal” (5). That alternative is, of course, invitational rhetoric, which is defined by the authors as “an invitation to understanding,” and “an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and see it as the rhetor does,” (5). Invitational rhetors invite audiences to create with them a situation in which multiple sides of an issue can be equally heard and respected. Understanding, not persuasion, is the goal.

In invitational rhetoric, the onus is on the rhetor to approach the rhetorical situation with the goal of understanding rather than persuasion. Krista Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening, the focus of Chapter 3, shifts the responsibility from the rhetor to the audience or listener. Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening as “a trope for interpretive invention and as a code of cross-cultural conduct,” one that “signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture,” particularly in moments of attempted “cross-cultural exchanges” (1). By attempting to understand not only claims, but also the values and assumptions that allow claims to function, Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening works toward better understanding, not mastery. And by locating identifications in both commonalities and differences, rhetorical listeners attempt to foster better communication across difference.

Embodied rhetoric is more difficult to define, only because, as you will see in Chapter 4, there are so many different definitions in circulation. The definition that I work from in this project is drawn primarily from Jane E. Hindman and Will Banks, who argue for a recognition of how embodied responses affect our practices of meaning-

making. As I use the term, embodied rhetoric refers to a conscious effort by an author to represent aspects of embodiment, including, but not limited to, lived experiences, embodied responses, and social positionalities and standpoints within the text he or she is shaping. Furthermore, when practicing embodied rhetoric, the author attempts to decipher how these “material circumstances,” (Jones Royster “A View” 228) affect how he or she understands the world. Such an attention to the body can serve to disrupt ideas of universality and mastery within a text by interrogating the specific localities of knowledge—in this case, specific bodies which are both writing and written by culture.

Of course, these brief definitions belie the complexity of these three theories, but even in such quick glosses certain commonalities become apparent. All three, for example, work in some way toward better understanding: invitational rhetoric hopes the audience will understand the rhetor, not just the claims but the person holding those claims; rhetorical listening asks that the listener work toward better understanding of the rhetor, flipping the terms of invitational rhetoric to reflect the agency of the listener; and embodied rhetoric provides one means of understanding the situatedness of knowledge and the positionality of the rhetor by drawing attention to lived experience. All three theories also pay particular attention to difference: in opinion, in background, in lived experience, and in communicative styles. In so doing, all three theories encourage a recognition, not a silencing, of the differences between us. They press us to imagine difference not always as something to be overcome or ignored, but as a productive source of knowledge. Finally, all three theories speak to issues of language and power. These theories ask us to reconsider who has the power to speak and in what ways. They urge us to reimagine the power of agency, of both rhetor and listener; to reconsider the power of

persuasion; and to explore the power of the body and of experience in academic and student texts, nudging us to think more fully about ideas of authority in/and writing.

### **Bridging the Divide: Feminist Rhetorics and Pedagogies**

The existence of alternative theories does not automatically translate into classroom practice, however. While invitational rhetoric, rhetorical listening, and embodied rhetoric offer alternatives to traditional forms of argument, they are not, themselves, pedagogical practices.<sup>ii</sup> Seeing connections between these theories and feminist pedagogy, I therefore attempted to construct a feminist rhetorical pedagogy rooted in these three theories. Such a move, building pedagogical practice from rhetorical theory, is not uncomplicated. In their recent collection *Teaching Rhetorica*, Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie address the concerns and benefits of constructing pedagogical practice from theory, particularly what they call “women’s rhetorics” (5). They note Lynn Worsham’s critique of the field’s seeming need to connect all theory back to the classroom, which could serve to “water down” complex theoretical thought (qtd. in Ronald and Ritchie 5). Perhaps it is this sort of concern that has led to the dearth of scholarship in composition and rhetoric that specifically links feminist rhetorical theory to feminist pedagogy. In fact, Ronald and Ritchie exclaim:

Despite the current energetic conversations about this newly reclaimed body of women’s rhetorics and its significant contributions to regendering an understanding of rhetorical history and theory, there’s been little documentation or theorizing about its effect on teaching writing and rhetoric or running composition programs. (5)

The authors go on to say that we need to do more than add feminist rhetorics to our courses (an “add women and stir” approach), but must also start to recognize how the presence of feminist rhetorics “might affect the kinds of classroom structures, projects, and goals we might create” (5). This project is an attempt to do just that.

This is not to say that feminist scholars in composition and rhetoric are not talking about classroom practice. As you will see in Chapter 1, scholars such as Susan Jarratt, Catherine Lamb, Susan Meisenhelder, Laura Micciche, Candace Spigelman, and Joyce Trebilcot all make (often very different) arguments about the way we teach writing.<sup>iii</sup> But what Ronald and Ritchie are advocating is something, I think, slightly different than the work most of these women are doing. Ronald and Ritchie wonder how women’s rhetorics *themselves* can inform classroom practice. Instead of interrogating *either* theory or practice, Ronald and Ritchie push scholars to examine how practice can be informed and constructed from theory, particularly feminist rhetorical theory.

One might ask why we need turn to feminist rhetorics in order to develop classroom practice; after all, there are many valid sources of inspiration and foundations on which to build pedagogy. But for those instructors attempting to work specifically from within a feminist pedagogy, feminist rhetorical theory provides a rich fount of material from which to build or strengthen pedagogical practice. This is in part because feminist rhetorical theory reflects a number of tenets of feminist pedagogy.

Defining a feminist pedagogy is more complicated than it sounds, however. It is perhaps more useful to talk about feminist *pedagogies* than it is to speak as if there is a single monolithic feminist approach to teaching. Just as there are multiple feminisms, there are multiple feminist pedagogies. Still, there are a number of core tenets, practices,

and philosophies that seem common to most feminist pedagogies. Jarratt lists “the decentering or sharing of authority, the recognition of students as sources of knowledge, a focus on processes (of writing and teaching) over products” as such common practices, but also notes that these are shared by process pedagogy (“Feminist” 115). Beth Daniell adds collaboration, student ownership, and coming to voice to this list of philosophies and practices, all also reflected in process pedagogy (91, 83). What is the difference, then, between process and feminist pedagogies? Jarratt distinguishes between the two by drawing attention to the underlying philosophy and politics of feminist pedagogy, highlighting feminist pedagogy’s “investment in a view of contemporary society as sexist and patriarchal, and of the complicity of reading, writing, and teaching in those conditions” (115). For Jarratt, feminist pedagogies are, in part, about concrete practices but are distinguished more appropriately by the worldview of feminist pedagogues.<sup>iv</sup>

The six editors of *The Feminist Teacher Anthology* also accentuate politics in their list of six “prominent” features of feminist pedagogy, including a commitment to “social transformation” and “improving the lives of women;” an attention to sexism, sexuality, and heterosexism; and an exploration of race, class, and gender, as well as their intersections (Cohee et al. 3). They also point out that feminist pedagogues draw attention to “larger structures of domination and oppression” and try to address “students’ fears and prejudices regarding difference” (7). Berenice Malka Fisher calls this a focus on “gender justice,” and says that teachers and students need to find ways to “come to grips with the different perspectives we variously bring to issues of gender justice” (3). Amanda Coffey and Sara Delamont point to the intersections of language and power as one of the driving forces behind feminist practice in the classroom (1). And a number of

contributors to *Meeting the Challenge: Innovative Feminist Pedagogies in Action* also note the focus on personal experience and identity politics in feminist pedagogical practice (see, for example, Sandra Bell, Marina Morrow, and Evangelina Tastsoglou), although these foci are being challenged by postmodern and post-structuralist feminists in collections like *Twenty-First-Century Feminist Classrooms*.

What this brief overview illustrates are both the commonalities between multiple perspectives on feminist pedagogy and some of the tensions, tensions that we see in feminist theory as well (essentialism vs. social construction, for example). What I would like to highlight are a few of the underlying philosophies of feminist pedagogical practice that I believe are also reflected in feminist rhetorical theory. Given that both strands—feminist pedagogy and feminist rhetorical theory—draw from feminist theory in general, the overlap is not that surprising. What is surprising is the lack of attention to these connections, at least in the fields of composition and rhetoric.

As you read through this project, you will see that the three theories on which I focus—invitational rhetoric, rhetorical listening, and embodied rhetoric—are particularly concerned with the negotiation of difference: in opinion, in positionality, in standpoint, in lived experience, and in bodies and embodiment. As *rhetorical* theories, they are focused on language practices. As *feminist* rhetorical theories, they focus on the interplay between language and power, particularly how language can serve to perpetuate patriarchal structures of dominance and control and how it may also begin to upset such structures. Feminist rhetorical theory shares feminist pedagogy's underpinnings of a desire for social transformation, more equitable distribution of power, and a more nuanced approach to difference. As such, a pedagogy developed from feminist rhetorical theory—what I have

been calling a feminist rhetorical pedagogy—focuses on how we teach students to use language, to persuade, to identify, to listen, and to communicate, and how such practices impact social dynamics and systems of power. Such a pedagogy encourages a more nuanced discussion of difference in the classroom and shines a focused light on issues of language and power. In doing so, both students and teachers can work not toward mastery and control, but understanding.

### **Framing My Teacher Research Study**

I do not believe it is enough for me to simply discuss *potential* pedagogical practices constructed from feminist rhetorical theory. Instead, I wanted to witness the effects of such practices, on both myself and my students, in order to see how they functioned (or failed to function) in an actual classroom setting. To that end, I constructed a three-semester teacher research study in a primarily sophomore-level persuasive writing course at the University of New Hampshire. First, a brief word about the course and the university context.

At UNH, all students are required to pass English 401: First-Year Writing, the only universal requirement on campus, but students in all majors are also required to take a number of writing intensive (WI) courses. English 503 fulfills a writing intensive requirement. A relatively new course, first piloted in the spring of 2001, it is not yet a specific requirement for majors (as is English 502: Technical Writing), but instead attracts majors from across the curriculum (Cannizzaro). And while all 500-level courses at UNH are technically sophomore-level, they are not limited to sophomores. Most 500-level writing courses include sophomores, juniors, seniors, and a few first-year students



who “tested out” of first-year writing by scoring a 4 or above on the Advanced Placement exam.

A campus with a student population of 14,844 in the fall of 2007, the University of New Hampshire is decidedly racially homogenous (UNH “Diversity Initiatives”). According to the 2007 UNH Diversity Progress Report, in the fall of 2006 only 5.6% of the student population at UNH were students of color. As might be expected given these demographics, the majority of my students in each of the three sections identified as white. In fact, only two students in three semesters identified as nonwhite. Of course this does not mean that only two students in three semesters would have identified as nonwhite if asked, only that two students voluntarily identified as nonwhite or were visually identified as such.<sup>v</sup>

It is against this backdrop that I conducted my teacher research study, guided by the following questions:<sup>vi</sup>

1. What would an invitational pedagogy look like?
2. What would a pedagogy of rhetorical listening look like?
3. What would an embodied pedagogy look like?
4. How might these three theories impact my teaching?
5. What sorts of assignments might I design so that students in my class might practice these three theories?
6. How might students in my class respond to these three theories?

These questions influenced my decision to use a teacher research format. Because I was not looking to prove a hypothesis, but instead explore the effects of an approach, teacher research seemed like the appropriate framework. As Ruth Ray Ray explains, it is

“qualitative rather than quantitative; hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis-testing; inductive rather than deductive; contextualized and naturalistic rather than controlled and scientific” (7). In other words, those practicing teacher research are not attempting to test a theory. They do not enter into their projects with hypotheses in mind. Instead, teacher researchers work inductively, gathering information and then generalizing from their data. Because I could not imagine a classroom that might be “controlled and scientific” the way a quantitative study would call for, I turned to teacher research as a way to understand my own pedagogical practices as well as my students’ responses.

This should not imply that teacher research is not *in any way* controlled. Teacher research practices, while perhaps more open-ended and “naturalistic,” as Ray says, do adhere to a number of guiding principles. Teacher-researchers tend to collect data by some combination of field notes, journaling, surveys, artifact analysis (of student essays and projects, for example), and direct observation, focus groups, and interviews (sometimes audio or video taped). Teacher-researchers tend to code their data before making inferences, yet are not necessarily bound to this “order.” For example, if a teacher-researcher begins to see a pattern in the data that she has collected, she may adjust her teaching practices based on that pattern (she may, for example, restructure discussion groups as a result of noticing a lack of focus in these groups), without having officially and systematically coded the data before her. Because teacher-researcher *are* teachers working in their own classrooms, such adjustments are often necessary.

This, too, is one of the reasons that I chose a teacher research format for my project. Because I was interested in my own teaching practices and how I might develop pedagogical approaches based in theoretical concepts, I needed a design that would allow

for my own presence as both subject and researcher. Taking cues from autoethnography, teacher research was one of the few—perhaps the only—designs available to me. I could not, for example, ask another teacher to study these theories, develop pedagogical practice based in these theories, and then observe her classroom as an outsider, asking her to walk me through her process. No, this project dictated that my own role, my own experiences, were texts to be studied as well. Of course this process of making the familiar foreign is far from simple, but it was the only option if I wanted to discuss my own pedagogical practices.

Finally, I was (and am) attracted to teacher research because of the way it attempts to put theory into practice—one of the grounding principles of this study. John Loughran concurs, noting that teacher research can “begin to address the theory-practice gap that is so often cited as a barrier to progression in teaching and learning” (11). This link between theory and practice is, in part, due to what David Hobson, one of the editors of the collection *Teachers Doing Research*, sees as an attention to “theories-in-use,” (8) and “reflection-as-action” (9), both concepts that appealed to me as both a teacher and a researcher.

This sense of self-reflection seems well suited to my project. One of the markers of teacher research is constant reflexivity, encouraging the teacher-researcher to pay particular attention to her own practices and the potential impact of those practices. This, of course, differs in many ways from more traditional research in which the observer is in some ways “outside” of the practice of teaching.<sup>vii</sup> Yet, in a now classic article, Ann Berthoff argues that this is exactly the new kind of research that the field needs. Berthoff believes that this kind of research (and she spells it REsearch, in order to emphasize the

looking-again quality of teacher research), “would not mean going out after new ‘data,’ but rather REconsidering what is at hand. REsearch would come to mean looking and looking at what happens in the English classroom” (30). To “REsearch” in this way draws our attention back to actual classroom practice, asking that teachers themselves become sources of knowledge about their classrooms, mining their own lived experiences as instructors, developing theory from these practices, and practices from theory.

Constant self-reflection is also a marker of feminist research methodologies, and, as this is a feminist project, it was important to me to try to pay attention to such practices. Patricia A. Sullivan explains that the difference between “feminist inquiry and the dominant, hypothetico-deductive model of inquiry is that the latter has produced no self-generated practice of reflection on its racial, class, and gender biases” (“Feminism” 57). Keeping a teaching journal provided me with one medium for this kind of reflection and I believe that my attempts to note my own racial, class, and gender biases inform this project. I am certain, however, that I will have failed to notice many.

Of course, teacher research has its drawbacks. One is the inherent bias—perhaps more so than in other types of research projects—that accompanies writing about one’s self. One might ask how I mitigated this bias in my project. In truth, I am not sure that I did. But as my research questions did not look for me to prove a hypothesis, my own bias could not taint the results in the typical ways. In terms of the questions that guide my study, typical bias was really only a major concern with the final question: How might students in my class respond to these three theories? While I might have hoped for a wholly positive response from students, I never actually believed that would happen—regardless of my pedagogical approach or classroom content. A negative response, then,

is a perfectly acceptable and useful one. Students' negative responses help me to reconsider and hone my own teaching practices. In this way, all responses are valuable. In fact, while positive responses to my teaching and to the content of the class are perhaps more personally validating, negative or lukewarm responses are often more useful in terms of my growth as an instructor.

In a more general way, however, bias haunts this study. How much, for example, might I have been constructing what I wanted to hear? How much did I shape conversations so that I received responses that supported my conclusions? And how much did I see only what I wanted to see in the notes, surveys, and my journals? I would like to say that none of that happened, that I was completely objective in my study. But I am sure that I was not. While never intentionally constructing conversations that I wanted to hear, as an instructor of the course, I am sure there were times when I guided conversations toward topics that seemed more productive—productive for the class, but perhaps for my study as well. But the same concerns trouble all studies in which researchers must, in some way, interpret data, shaping material into an argument. The best I could hope to do within the confines of this particular study was to try to be aware of the potential for such shaping and to read and re-read the material I was receiving.

### **Data Collection and Coding**

One of the ways to try to correct for (too much) researcher bias is by collecting and coding a variety of data. Throughout the course of my project, I kept a teaching journal, recording the process of constructing new pedagogical practices before the semester started, as well as my reactions to each class. I typically wrote in my journal

immediately after the class period or student-teacher conference concluded. In these journals I voiced my own struggles with enacting pedagogical practices, noting during the first semester, for example, that an invitational pedagogy, “is so freaking hard. I’m too opinionated.”

Because I wrote in my teaching journal after almost every class and conference, entries vary drastically in length, content, and tone. I usually wrote for at least fifteen minutes after each class or conference, but, because this journaling was driven by what occurred in the classroom or my office, recording times also varied drastically. My focus throughout these entries was on reactions to the class and to my pedagogy, as I noted above, and students’ reactions to content or classroom practice. For example, I recorded my students’ reactions to the term “feminist,” noting, “It’s always interesting to me that so many of the women in my class hate that term. Men often express less hostility toward it, at least openly, but the girls [sic] tend to tell me that we’ve basically taken care of gender inequality. That’s mostly what happened today.” I go on to explain that, “three women in the class told me that they don’t consider themselves feminist because they want to get married and have children. How do I deal with this sort of reaction? Is it my job to change their minds about what feminists are? Given my new understanding of invitational rhetoric, how do I do that? Do I do that? It seems like embodied might help here.” Such entries allowed me to reflect on my own teaching processes and, in rereading them, to see trends in students’ reactions to the theories and practices, as well as trends and changes in my pedagogical moves. While there was little rhyme or reason to the journaling itself (except for my attempt to move beyond recording what we did as a class

and focusing instead on reflection), reading these journals was helpful to me as I proceeded with this project, as well as when I planned for each new section.

In order to try to capture events and responses that were more “in the moment,” I also took notes during class. With neither the time nor the money to record and transcribe three-semester of class periods, I chose instead to take hand-written or typed (I sometimes had my laptop with me) notes whenever appropriate. Such an approach clearly lends itself to a number of judgment calls. One never knows, for example, what might later seem “appropriate.” But there were times, as was the case during the discussion that you will see in chapter 3, when it was clear to me that there was something worth noting. Still, my decision to rely on hand-notes means that I missed a good deal of material. Were I to do a similar study again, I would focus on one section of one course and video or audio record each class session. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, such an approach seemed unfeasible.

My note-taking, therefore, had a sense of spontaneity to it. As I could not plan exactly what would happen during every class, I had no set methodology for note-taking. I did, however, try to keep certain key concepts in mind as I took notes, and attempted to be attuned to these concepts during the actual practice of taking notes. I looked, for example, for moments when students seemed to be in conflict with each other or with me. I recorded dialogue between students, particularly in these moments of conflict. I also listened specifically for moments when students used some of the key terms of this project, including debate, dialogue, Rogerian, invitational, embodied, and rhetorical listening. In short, I listened specifically for terminology related to the rhetorical theories we were discussing and practicing, for moments of conflict or disagreement among

students, and for responses to my own teaching practices. In truth, students rarely commented on my teaching practices in class, but commented more specifically in their end of the term surveys.

At times my note-taking was less spontaneous. There were days where I crafted large or small group discussions or projects that focused specifically on these key concepts. For example, I asked students to form small groups and discuss open adoption (a topic about which we read). Each group, however, had a particular discussion framework within which they were asked to work. One group, for example, used a traditional debate format. Another group used an invitational format. After their discussion, I asked each group to talk about what it was like to try to work within those frameworks. During such discussions, I recorded students' responses on my laptop (I would bring my computer when I knew that students would be discussing these concepts; otherwise, I took hand-written notes.). In these moments, I tried to record as much of their dialogue as possible, as close to verbatim as possible. When looking back over these notes, I looked more carefully for patterns, such as how many students voiced a positive response to an attempt at invitational rhetoric.

Additionally, I collected all of the students' writing throughout the three semesters. During the first semester, I made photocopies of their assignments, keeping them in a locked file cabinet at my apartment. During the following two semesters, students submitted all major work online using "blackboard," UNH's online platform for teachers and students. Students submitted their work to me using the "digital dropbox," so that only the student and I could access the work. Assignments included deliberations, issue reports, audience analyses, proposals, reviews, larger analytical and persuasive



essays, and short (two-page) responses to a variety of topics, including scholarly articles that students read surrounding each of the three theories I discuss in this project. During the final two semesters, students also engaged in an online forum on blackboard.

Finally, I distributed a survey at the end of the semester, a copy of which is included in the appendix. Surveys asked students whether or not they had heard of each of these theories before this class, whether they thought they were useful, and whether or not their instructor (me) had utilized these theories in her practices. The surveys also asked students to comment on any concerns they might have had about the study itself, and any expectations that they had about the class. Because the surveys were somewhat long, students were able to complete them at home. I should note that in order to collect and include this information, I received IRB approval for all aspects of my study. The study was explained to students within the first week of the semester and students signed consent forms during the first week of classes and again during the final week of classes. A copy of the student consent form can be found in the appendix. Students' names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

At the end of each semester, I attempted to code what was a rather daunting amount of data. I first read through my journals, looking for moments when I seemed concerned, moments when I seemed to struggle, and moments of accomplishment. While I could not code for specific key terms, these preliminary attempts at coding allowed me to identify entries that were especially marked by frustration, worry, or triumph, forcing me to set some limits on my data. In terms of student work, preliminary coding varied depending on the assignment. In shorter response pieces, I looked for similar moments in students' work: moments of frustration, confusion, or triumph. In larger essays,

especially the campus issue project (about which I write in chapter 3), I looked primarily for moments in which students were attempting to identify the cultural logics underlying larger claims. In this case, I looked specifically for the terms “cultural logics,” “logic,” “values,” and “assumptions,” to help me identify such moments, marking these terms with a highlighter or, if in digital form, the highlight function on Word. When I re-read my class and conference notes, I looked specifically for moments of conflict or disagreement, as well as those major terms mentioned above. I also looked for patterns in student discussions or on-line responses. I paid attention to how often students responded negatively to a particular rhetorical approach, or to a particular pedagogical decision.

Despite my best efforts, coding in this study quickly became problematic. But I am not alone in my coding struggles. Keith Grant-Davie points out that “English studies involve many kinds of interpretation of data, yet coding is the only kind for which researchers habitually report formal reliability ratings and for which researchers expect ‘some assurance of objectivity.’ We do not hold literary critics to the same standards of accountability, demanding, for instance, that a Marxist or feminist reading of a text be supported by a reliability test” (282). Grant-Davie goes on to say that one reason for this discrepancy is that literary critics are asked to give multiple readings of a text, another is that the “data” of such readings is more easily accessible: most people can find a copy of *The Canterbury Tales*, whereas they do not have access to my students’ assignments or my teaching journal.

Still, Grant-Davie draws attention to the difficulty of coding data, and I would argue that coding data in a teacher research project is particularly problematic because categories overlap and because hypotheses are rarely being tested in a formal way.

Instead, teacher-researchers are recording attempts at practices and processes, often their own, and trying to create a “thick description” of what they see. Coding becomes only one part of such a description.

Margaret Eisenhart and Hilda Borko, authors of *Designing Classroom Research*, also argue that validity testing, particularly in terms of coding, “was worked out with specific reference to experimental designs” (92). Qualitative studies, such as this one, complicate our understanding of validity tests. In an earlier essay, Eisenhart, in conjunction with Kenneth Howe, argued that validity in qualitative projects “might be based instead on how carefully the study is designed, conducted, and presented; how sensitively it treats human subjects; and how well it contributes to important educational issues, including debates about educational theory and practice” (Eisenhart and Borko 93). I hope I have shown how my study was designed and conducted. I hope, too, that throughout this project the reader will get a sense of how sensitively I treated not my human subjects, but the *students*, the actual humans, that were part of both this study and my classes. And finally, I hope that throughout this project, you will see the contribution of this study to debates about theory and practice in context of the first-year writing classroom. Imagining alternatives to the argument culture, teaching those alternatives, and developing pedagogical practice rooted in those alternatives so that students and teachers can work toward better understanding and communication, especially across difference—this is one such contribution.

## CHAPTER 1

### EXPLORING ARGUMENT: DEFINITIONS, RESPONSES, ALTERNATIVES

Every April at the University of New Hampshire, teaching assistants, lecturers, and professors in the undergraduate composition program gather in the faculty lounge for one purpose: The Book Fair. A tradition in the department for at least the near decade that I have been here, The Book Fair is the one day a year when book reps from all of the major textbook companies set up tables in the faculty lounge to display their new, best selling, and most appropriate textbooks. And they give them (or send them) to you for *free*. As most people in my department know, I love The Book Fair. Over the course of my time here, a number of the book reps and I have gotten to know each other rather well. So when they see me, they start stacking books. They know what I'm looking for, especially lately: argument textbooks. Lately, they've been running out of textbooks to give me. I have most of them already.

Of course textbooks cannot be said to speak for program policies, but the proliferation of argument-based textbooks, and the general consistency of the kinds of argument imagined in these books, points to a general consensus about what many of us mean when we talk about argument in the classroom. This is not to say, however, that all instructors of college writing in this country teach to or from a textbook. Nor is it to say that those who do, teach *solely* from the textbook. In other words, I imagine that many instructors, like myself, supplement their textbooks with outside readings from a variety

of other sources, expanding the scope of reading materials, examples, and available means. And there are a number of alternatives from which to choose: sourcebooks such as Emmel, Resch, and Tenney's *Argument Revisited; Argument Redefined* and Timothy Barnett's *Teaching Argument in The Composition Course: Background Readings*, both of which include essays and selections that question the limits of what we might call "traditional" ideas about argument; monographs such as Candace Spigelman's *Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*, which asks that we re-imagine what "counts" as evidence, and pushes readers to complicate commonly held prejudices about emotion and rationality; and a heartening number of scholarly articles in which authors think through what it means to argue—and communicate—effectively. Finally, there is even a glut of popular press texts focused on theories of negotiation, mediation, and communication meant primarily for business managers and executives, all of which offer alternatives to what I am calling antagonistic approaches to argument.<sup>viii</sup>

Before I turn to a discussion of argument textbooks geared primarily toward college composition,<sup>ix</sup> I would like to take a moment to clarify my terms, particularly what it is that I mean by argument, and, in particular, "traditional" argument. As I imagine the term, argument is a form of communication and conversation, so that every argument is a form of communication, but not every form of communication is an intentional argument.<sup>x</sup> An argument, at least for the purposes of this project, is defined as a form of communication or conversation in which the parties involved hold differing or divergent opinions or views. Arguments can take a number of different forms. Some of them may be heated, or oppositional, as is so often the case with antagonistic argument. Others, however, may be more friendly or subdued, leaning more toward what many

might term a conversation. I find it useful, however, to mark the difference at the point of origin—the divergence in views. Argument, then, is what often happens when we encounter difference: someone with different views, different opinions, different values. This is not to say that we must then launch into an “argument,” in the sense of a heated discussion about these differences. Instead, when two or more parties meet, realize that they have divergent views—or when an author addresses an audience with whom he imagines his views diverge—we enter the realm of argument.

Defining *traditional* argument, like so many definitions, is a more complicated matter than it may first appear because “traditional” can signify differently for different audiences. Of course we could call Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, or Socrates traditional—certainly they comprise one foundational history (one tradition) of rhetoric and therefore, I would argue, composition. And the definition of argument reflected by such rhetors is one that does, in fact, tend to privilege the art of persuasion (Richards 3). But we might also imagine more recent scholars such as Kenneth Burke and Chaim Perelman as “traditional,” perhaps simply due to the ubiquity of their names in discussions of argument. But in fact, Burke and Perelman often complicate and challenge Aristotelian argument.<sup>xi</sup>

So “traditional,” is a tricky term, sometimes lumping together very disparate figures. For the purposes of this project, I am using the term “traditional” to mean something closer to what Ronald and Ritchie seem to mean when they write “traditional rhetoric (academic argument)” (“Introduction” 10). Traditional, in this way, draws at least in part on something akin to “habitual,” or those values and approaches that are reflected in most of our argument textbooks, values and approaches that seem to get

priority in first-year writing courses, values and approaches against which many scholars—especially feminist scholars— have been reacting.<sup>xii</sup> These values include a focus on change, persuasion, and mastery, and what many might call an “oppositional framework.”

Again, I would like to be clear: I do not think traditional argument or the desire to persuade is, in and of itself, problematic. Change is necessary, and traditional argument and persuasion are one form of facilitating change. But they are only one way. And that’s the distinction that I wish to make clear. I am in no way advocating the eradication of traditional argument or an intent to persuade. Instead, I hope to show how the primary focus on an *intent to persuade* or to win crowds out other useful forms of argument and communication. To that end, in this chapter I will explore definitions of argument as forwarded by popular composition textbooks focused on argument. I will then turn to feminist responses to argument, discussing a few alternatives to traditional approaches. Finally, I will illustrate the ways in which three common alternatives, while useful, share similar shortcomings in terms of power and persuasion.

### **Surveying Argument Textbooks**

Turning to popular argument textbooks can help to clarify what we, as instructors of college composition, seem to mean when we talk about teaching argument. I do not want to imply that scholars do not theorize about argument in complicated and nuanced ways. In fact, argument theory is an incredibly rich field of study. Unfortunately, these nuanced examinations of argument rarely find their way into composition textbooks. And, as I have previously noted, while I also do not want to imply that classroom

practices are dictated solely by textbooks, I believe an overview of popular texts can at least begin to illustrate potential classroom practices and values.

What is heartening about current argument textbooks is what appears to be a growing minority trend to define argument not in terms of opposition, but in terms of inquiry, discovery, or communication. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, for example, tell students (and instructors) that argument is “not a pro-con debate,” (4). Argument, for these authors, “entails a desire for truth; it aims to find the best solutions to complex problems” (4).<sup>xiii</sup> Arguers aren’t attempting to “win a game but to find and promote the best belief or course of action” (4). Argument, in their textbook *Writing Arguments*, is part “truth seeking” activity and part persuasion (10).

In *The Aims of Argument*, Timothy W. Crusius and Carolyn E. Channell ask students to practice “mature reasoning,” which they define in this way: “rather than starting with a position to defend, mature reasoners work toward a position. If they have an opinion to start with, mature reasoners think it through and evaluate it rather than rush to its defense. To win is not to defeat an opponent but rather to gain insight into the topic at hand” (4). Mature reasoning also “challenge[s] unexamined belief, the stances people take out of habit without much thought” (6).

In *Having Your Say* by Davida H. Charney et al., “[a]rguing means treating an issue as open instead of settled. If authors are fair and open-minded, arguing helps everyone understand the issue better, find weaknesses in their positions, and sometimes increase the amount of agreement” (3). The authors continue by noting that, “Reaching agreement is difficult. Sometimes it requires overcoming mistrust and prejudices. Agreeing does not mean giving up important convictions without strong reason. But it



does require listening carefully and responding politely to what others say, looking for shared concerns and ways to work together. The goal is to argue, not quarrel; have a civil conversation, not a fight” (3).

What I see in these texts is an attempt to broaden the definition of argument beyond the pro-con debate in order to take into consideration the ways in which interlocutors attempt to negotiate differences in opinion. The varied authors contrast argument with quarreling, fighting, winning, defeating opposition, and working against others. They offer alternatives to “traditional argument,” which Nancy Wood, author of a number of textbooks on argument, holds is still “the type of argument that predominates in American culture” (180). She defines traditional argument as the type in which:

the arguer states a claim and proves it by drawing on various types of proofs, including reasoning and evidence. The object is to convince an audience that the claim is valid and that the arguer is right. In this model of argument, the arguer uses the rebuttal to demonstrate how the opposition is wrong and to state why the audience should reject that position. The emphasis on traditional argument is on winning the argument. (180)

Wood and others contrast this type of argument with mature reasoning, civil conversation, mediation, and truth seeking.

These authors are not the only ones to attempt to move away from the oppositional styles of argument—at least in their introductory chapters—but they are the ones who seem to make the most deliberate effort to do so. This trend would seem to work against my claim in the introduction that our culture, including our classrooms, is

one structured primarily around antagonistic argument—debate. Yet two points temper my optimism about argument in college composition classrooms. The first is the number of textbooks that still rely on a much more traditional definition of argument. These include, but are certainly not limited to, *The Uses of Argument* by Stephen Toulmin; *The Elements of Argument* and *The Structure of Argument* by Rottenberg and Winchell; *Well-Crafted Argument* by White and Billings; *Discovering Arguments* by Memering and Palmer; the more flashy *Dynamic Argument* by Lamm and Everett; and *Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments* by Faigley and Selzer, where the authors define argument as the “attempt to change people’s minds by convincing them of the validity of new ideas or that a particular course of action is the best one to take” (2).

In these textbooks, and others like them, the authors define argument in more traditional terms, at times noting alternatives like dialogue or Rogerian argument (sometimes as an actual sidebar, as in *Dynamic Argument*), but primarily focusing on argument as persuasion, as an attempt to change one’s opponent, and as the supporting of a claim with rational and reasonable evidence.<sup>xiv</sup> Again, this is not to say that these forms of traditional argument are inappropriate in all contexts, only that the focus on such forms to the exclusion of alternatives assumes that an oppositional stance is the best way to achieve one’s goals (and that persuasion is the only goal of argument).

The second aspect of these textbooks that makes me temper my enthusiasm for what seems to be an inclusion of alternative approaches to argument is that despite the author’s introductory materials, most argument textbooks still reflect a rather traditional approach in their readings, classifications, and assignments. In fact, even in the introductory materials, many of the authors who seem to favor a more expansive

definition of argument fall back on explanations of argument that favor an oppositional stance resulting in, at best, a sort of bipolar understanding of argument in composition.

Look, for example, at the Ramage, Bean, and Johnson text, which is, notably, one of Pearson Longman's best-selling argument textbooks (Cutler). These three authors originally explain that argument is not a fight, quarrel, or pro-con debate and that the goal of argument is not to "win a game but to find and promote the best belief or course of action" (4). Yet a closer look at their definitions reveals a more traditional notion of argument *as* opposition—just a particular kind of opposition. For Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, the difference between a quarrel and an argument is evidence. Quarrelers, the authors say, "exchange antagonistic assertions without any attempt to support them rationally" (8). A quarrel turns into an argument "because one of the quarrelers has offered a reason for her assertion" (8). "For an argument to be effective," then, "an arguer is obligated to clarify and support the reasons presented" (8). The authors offer an example of a sixteen-year-old girl who wants to stay out later than her parents would like. The young woman explains that she should be able to stay out later because she's sixteen. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson hold that simply stating the girl's age is not a good argument (although it is an argument, according to the authors, because she has given a reason to support her claim). Instead, if she hopes to succeed, she must "anticipate the sorts of questions the assumptions will raise in the minds of her parents" (9).

Clearly, the goal of this young woman is to prove her claim, to convince her parents that because she is sixteen she is old enough to stay out later and, one assumes, make her own decisions. While the authors may claim that the goal of argument is to "seek the best or most just solution to a problem while observing all available evidence,

listening with an open mind to the views of all stakeholders, clarifying and attempting to justify your own values and assumptions, and taking responsibility for your argument,” this example reflects not an attempt to find the most just solution, but instead to win—to stay out past curfew (or to change the curfew). Whether or not this hypothetical young woman is successful, or whether or not she and her parents do in fact come to a compromise, is never discussed. Instead we see a young woman who wants to change her parents’ minds. And to do so, to win, she is encouraged to anticipate the objections of her parents who, in this example at least, are positioned as her opposition (whether or not the authors use that particular term).

So while these authors try to open argument up beyond oppositional dualistic debate formats, the practice of argument as illustrated in their textbook seems very much about persuading an audience of one’s opinion. In fact, there is little discussion of a *rhetor* having his or her viewpoints changed. Argument, in this equation, may include a sense of compromise and community, but its primary goal seems to be persuading others to “compromise,” as opposed to compromising one’s own position as well.

Similarly, in *The Aims of Argument*, Crusius and Channell spend much of their introductory materials defining argument as “mature reasoning,” and, in doing so, provide a definition of argument that does seem to challenge and expand traditional notions of the term. As we have seen, Crusius and Channell contend that mature reasoners work toward a belief, rather than starting from a defensive position; they attempt to gain insight, rather than to win; and they seek “a sound opinion” which is “consistent with the facts and that other people will respect and take seriously” (4). Mature reasoning is contrasted with debate, which the authors define as a formal practice

in which “opponents take a predetermined, usually assigned, side and attempt to defend it, in much the same way that an army or a football team must hold its ground. The point is to win, to best one’s opponent” (4). In such a framework, debaters “must hold their positions at all costs,” whereas mature reasoners may change their minds if the evidence persuades them to do so (4).

In some ways, Crusius and Channell offer the reader (presumably students and instructors) a definition of argument that allows for, even encourages, exploration, discussion, and change in both rhetor and audience. In contrasting mature reasoning with debate, the authors reference a number of aspects of what I have been calling “traditional argument.” The term “debate” itself has often been associated with traditional argument, as has the oppositional standpoint that characterizes debates. Yet Crusius and Channell are talking about a very specific form of debate—the formal debate, in which participants are assigned a position and charged with defending that position. Certainly aspects of the formal debate (such as the oppositional standpoint and the unwillingness to change one’s own point of view) are hallmarks of traditional argument, yet in the kind of formal debate that the authors reference, participants are, as they say, often “assigned” a position. This, I would argue, is not typical of debate as we often mean it in composition classrooms. It seems to me that the authors contrast mature reasoning with a rather artificial form of debate, perhaps leading students and instructors to imagine that as long as one has not been assigned a position and is not standing behind a podium, they are not really debating.

Admittedly, this is a matter of degree. Whether or not participants are assigned topics to defend, students seem often to imagine argument to mean something very

similar to formal debate, where they must find a position (and the process of discovery varies greatly from textbook to textbook and, I imagine, from classroom to classroom), find evidence to support that position, and then defend it against their opposition. Develop a claim and support that claim. Convince an opponent to change her mind. Win the argument.

And in fact this is exactly the sort of assignment that Crusius and Channell ask of students. A brief survey of the table of contents reveals assignments that seem to reflect their notion of mature reasoning, especially their “argument as inquiry” section. Yet the assignment itself—the “exploratory essay,”—ends with students formulating a claim that they can defend. Students use the exploratory essay to inquire about a topic, researching and evaluating numerous positions within that topic, and then work to position themselves within that larger conversation. Using the information they have gathered, they construct a claim that they can successfully support given their new knowledge on the issue. Using a traditional Toulmin approach, students can then evaluate the effectiveness of their arguments, determining whether their arguments would persuade others to change their minds. Would their arguments, in other words, stand up to attack? Would they hold? Would they, as rhetors, prevail?

Again, I do not want to imply that such assignments are *de facto* problematic, nor do I want to imply that authors such as Crusius and Channell are not contributing to a more expansive definition of argument. In fact, I applaud their discussion of mature reasoning, especially the notion of change and discovery in the rhetor. What I do want to draw attention to, however, are the ways in which even those texts which seem to challenge traditional argument often reflect many of the same core values as more

conventional textbooks, values like persuasion, an oppositional standpoint, and a sort of top-down notion of change and control.

Of course, as some of these authors have themselves shown, there are exceptions to these sorts of approaches. Crusius and Channell do discuss the importance of change in the rhetor, and Ramage, Bean, and Johnson ask that students listen with an open mind to all stakeholders. In fact, one of the most expansive definitions of argument comes from one of Bedford/St. Martin's best-selling argument textbooks: Lunsford and Ruskiewicz's *everything's an argument* (Butcher). Not only do Lunsford and Ruskiewicz draw specific attention to the persuasive elements of language itself, they reference a number of alternative approaches to argument, including both Rogerian argument and Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin's notion of invitational rhetoric—the subject of my next chapter. Yet, again, once students and instructors leave the introductory materials and venture into readings, examples, and assignments, they find that even in *everything's an argument*, the types of (written) arguments that they're asked to read and write are relatively traditional.

My discussion of common argument textbooks is meant to illustrate the typical approach to argument in college composition classrooms in the United States. Such approaches, while making room for a number of alternatives, tend to reflect a view of argument that asks the student rhetor to formulate a claim, find evidence to support that claim, and then attempt to construct an argument that would persuade his or her opposition—those with whom the student rhetor would, supposedly, disagree (or those who would disagree with the student). This might lead one to ask what is wrong with this

sort of approach to argument. Don't students need to know how to formulate and support a claim? Shouldn't we be teaching them these skills?

Absolutely. Again, it is only when this sort of technique is imagined to be the *only* or *always* the best way to approach disagreement that it becomes problematic.

I turn now to feminist responses to argument, particularly the work of Sally Miller Gearhart and Susan Jarratt, because such scholars directly engage the uses of argument both within the classroom and the larger civic realm. Feminist teacher-scholars draw attention to issues of power and persuasion inherent in our discussions and uses of argument, and therefore help me to examine some of the reasons why these traditional approaches might be considered problematic, at least in some contexts or for some purposes. I will then explore a number of alternative approaches to argument, including negotiation, mediation, and Rogerian argument, illustrating the benefits of such approaches, but also discussing their limitations.

### **Feminist Responses to Argument**

I would like to begin this section by discussing what I would call "bookends" to the feminist conversation surrounding argument in composition studies. I should note, however, that these are not the only two pieces that one might use in order to delineate the edges of this conversation. In other words, while I find the work of Jarratt and Gearhart to provide a useful framework from within which to explore this issue, others might choose scholars such as Catherine Lamb and bell hooks, for example. For me, Jarratt and Gearhart draw attention to what is at stake when we talk about teaching



argument—particularly traditional persuasion-based argument—in the composition classroom. I begin with Gearhart, as she provides the position to which Jarratt responds.

In 1979, Gearhart published “The Womanization of Rhetoric” in *Women’s Studies International Quarterly*. Here Gearhart voices her rather radical opinion that “any intent to persuade is an act of violence” (53). Gearhart makes a distinction between change—which she says we do naturally—and an intent-to-change. As entities existing in an environment, as energy encountering energy, we are constantly changed by and changing each other. The harm, says Gearhart, is in our *intent* to change one another. Such intent reflects what she calls the “conquest/conversion mindset” (54). Gearhart explains that, “in the conquest model we invade or violate. In the conversion model we work very hard not simply to conquer but to get every assurance that our conquest of the victim is really giving her what she wants” (54). Gearhart includes most teaching, especially the teaching of rhetoric, in this conquest/conversion model, holding that “as modern critics and practitioners of public discourse we have been committed to the improvement in our students of the fine art of persuasion. In fact, our teaching, even if it were not the teaching of persuasion, is in itself an insidious form of violence” (53). And although she does not single out teachers of rhetoric here, she later explains her belief that “speech and rhetoric teachers have been training a competent breed of weapons specialists” skilled in the (she would say “violent”) art of persuasion (55).

I imagine that most instructors, particularly those of rhetoric, would take issue with this characterization of their practices (and, often, their passion). But instructors and teachers are not alone in their practice of what Gearhart sees as violent tendencies. For Gearhart, “to thrust a sword into another person does not differ significantly from

wishing them ill or from fantasizing a sword thrust into their heart” (54). Furthermore, “where the intent is to change another, the difference between a persuasive metaphor and a violent artillery attack is obscure and certainly one of degree rather than kind” (55).

Perhaps it goes without saying, but I disagree with Gearhart here. I imagine that if given the choice, she would prefer I wished her ill than thrust a sword into her belly. Similarly, I imagine she would rather I came to her door with a persuasive metaphor than launch a violent artillery attack at her home. Still, it seems worth noting that Gearhart, like Foss and Griffin in the next chapter (who draw on the work of Gearhart), makes a distinction between change and intent-to-change. And while Gearhart, at least in my opinion, takes the notion of persuasion as violence to its illogical extreme—where metaphors and artillery attacks are, for all intents and purposes, the same thing—I think we can recognize instances of what we might call cultural, intellectual, or even gendered violence when one culture attempts to change another. While not physically violent, such intent-to-change, particularly when ill-informed, does seem akin to a violent act. But then, with what options does this leave us? Can we never intend to change others? If I encounter a student who is racist or homophobic, should I not attempt to change that student? Does not such change work toward a more equitable society?

Gearhart herself poses this scenario, noting, “Surely it is of value to seek to alter injustices, to change oppressive societal institutions. Is there a way to relate to each other, to other entities, in acts that participate in the changing of our world but which do not themselves recapitulate our heritage of violence?” (56). Gearhart believes there are such ways. For her, this includes “a deliberate creation or co-creation of an atmosphere in which people or things, if and only if they have the internal basis for change, may change

themselves” (57). In this configuration the rhetor is not attempting or intending to change another. Instead, the rhetor provides an environment conducive to change, but only if the “audience” is already conducive to changing him or herself.<sup>xv</sup> In 1979, Gearhart believed that we might be on the verge of a sort of paradigm shift, writing:

We are perhaps on the brink of understanding that we do not need to be persuaders, that we no longer need to intend to change others. We are not the speaker, the-one-with-the-truth, the-one-who-with-his-power-will-change-lives. We are the matrix, we are she-who-is-the-home-of-this-particular-human-interaction, we are a co-creator and co-sustainer of the atmosphere in whose infinity of possible transformations we will all change. (58)

Change, then, will occur—must occur—but it will not be the result of persuasion by others. Instead, everyone will change, will transform, in ways that contribute to their own growth. For this sort of self-change to occur, for participants to create the matrix or environment that is conducive to such change (or a decision not to change), the persons involved in such a process must “feel equal in power to each other” (57). Unfortunately, Gearhart does not provide a means by which one might create such an environment of equality.

This stance by Gearhart represents one response to traditional argument. For her, traditional argument, traditional rhetoric, with its focus on persuasion and change is an act of violence where one person attempts to impose his or her will on another. Gearhart would like to see traditional argument replaced by her notion of atmosphere creation and self-change, a move that she calls a “womanization” of rhetoric. Gearhart sees this new

approach as one marked by respect for self and others, and one that reflects the feminist principles of “interaction and the development of new forms of relationship which allow for wholeness in the individual and differences among people and entities” (59). The crucial question for Gearhart is this: “Can we with integrity intend to change another?” (59). Gearhart would clearly answer no. Susan Jarratt, however, would disagree.

In “Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict,” Jarratt expresses her concerns about college composition classrooms—particularly those situated within an expressivist or feminist pedagogical framework—where conflict is minimized in favor of cooperation or support. Jarratt uses Gearhart as a touchstone for the kind of arguments that she sees some feminist scholars making against conflict and argument in the classroom, but Gearhart is not her only concern. Jarratt cites more moderate scholars such as Elisabeth Däumer and Sandra Runzo, who favor personal experiences in the writing classroom in an attempt to avoid conflict and challenge what they see as an aggressive masculine mode of writing (269).

Jarratt further notes that this discomfort with persuasion and conflict is echoed in expressivist texts such as Peter Elbow’s *Writing Without Teachers* and Donald Murray’s *Write to Learn*. Both texts, says Jarratt, minimize conflict and dissensus, arguing instead for a model in which writers and readers avoid confrontation in favor of either consensus or individual authority (the writer may listen to all viewpoints but, in the end, asserts her own personal authority over the text). Jarratt uses Elbow’s *Writing Without Teachers* as an example of how these attempts to de-center and share authority—one common goal of feminist teachers—can create particular problems for female students and feminist instructors.

Elbow's description of "the believing game," is one such example of a non-confrontational classroom stance. To participate in the believing game, students are instructed to "believe *all* the assertions," (148, italics in original), to "believe everything, particularly what seems strange or unpleasant" (170), and risk "swallowing what is alien" (176). Doing so, says Elbow, requires that we overcome our fears of being "A large opening that anything can be poured into" (185). Jarratt sees a number of problems with such a non-confrontational stance. The first is that asking students to be open to any possibility, any opinion, can serve to reproduce social gender inequality, asking yet again that female students passively listen and accept any position offered. Enacting such a pedagogy can also prove problematic for the female teacher who, like her students, may position herself (inadvertently or not) as the nurturing mother who must accept all viewpoints as valid. This passive positioning makes it particularly difficult for female teachers to challenge patriarchal, racist, sexist, homophobic, or other violent content in the classroom (268).<sup>xvi</sup> In short, Jarratt believes that the believing game is a "feminization of a masculinist discourse of logic. That is, if taken to heart by a man, it would really help a male listener experience a female discourse. But for a female listener, the effect is much different" (273-74). The effect is in essence to ask women to be that "opening into which anything can be poured" (Elbow 185).

According to Jarratt, such attempts to avoid conflict may actually reproduce patriarchal power structures. Jarratt uses Elbow's work to illustrate that in attempting to reduce or eliminate conflict from classrooms, many instructors reproduce feminized (as opposed to feminist) discursive patterns in which students are asked to remain passive, accepting, and quiet. Such an approach can create an atmosphere in which all

propositions appear valid, where sexist, racist, or homophobic statements remain unchallenged.

Jarratt's concerns as she has voiced them here seem to speak to the kind of atmosphere that Gearhart hopes to create, one in which participants are co-creators of an atmosphere of equality, one in which the intent-to-persuade plays no part. And while Jarratt, too, hopes for more equal relationships, she worries that "Gearhart's model pays no attention to the power of institutions to reproduce ideology" (266). In other words, Gearhart relies too much on a faith in individual agency. Furthermore, Jarratt believes that "Gearhart does not account for the way other struggling voices can be drowned out, despite the good intentions of the instructor, in specific communication contexts where the dominant discourse is well represented" (266). This returns us to the "how" of Gearhart's proposal. How does one create an environment in which all voices are equally heard, equally valued?

But Jarratt's concerns about such critiques of argument do not end with unequal power relations—what we might call the means of argument. She is also concerned with the effects, explaining that composition classrooms that minimize or eliminate traditional argument do not prepare students to enter conversations in the civic and public realms. Jarratt believes that in order to enact change, students must be well-versed in the art of persuasion. While Audre Lorde might argue that the "master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," Jarratt contends that not owning those tools (in this case, skills in traditional debate, persuasion, and conflict) leaves students ill-equipped to enter that house at all. In contrast to Gearhart's rejection of persuasion and traditional rhetoric, Jarratt hopes for a more rhetorical pedagogy in which instructors help students "to see

how differences emerging from their texts and discussions have more to do with those contexts than they do with an essential and unarguable individuality” (277). This, she believes, can help students to place their own experiences within a social context, thereby reconnecting the personal to the public, a move that may help them to recognize and confront structures of inequality and oppression. An ability to negotiate (to find a way through) conflict, and to participate in argument is for Jarratt a form of power, one that students need to learn to wield effectively. Of course Gearhart would call this a form of power-over, another example of the violence of persuasion.

We can see how Gearhart and Jarratt can work to frame feminist responses to traditional argument, particularly argument housed in persuasion. Both authors also draw attention to the issue of difference and power in the context of argument. Gearhart hopes that we can begin to build matrices and environments in which we all create meaning and nurture the potential for self-change, but in order to do so all participants need to feel as though they have equal power within that matrix. Jarratt worries that such a space is an impossibility, as participants bring with them cultural inequalities and distributions of power that always already are written on and speak through the individual. In other words, such power differentials are not simply erased by wishing it so.

Instructors then can find themselves in a conundrum: persuasion does seem to imply a sense of power-over, a feeling that I know better than you and therefore you should change your opinion or course of action to meet my own assumptions about the best course. Such an approach seems not to erase difference so much as it does (potentially) bulldoze it in favor of change. On the other hand, argument and persuasion may be necessary tactics in the civic realm. In order to change unequal power relations

(as well as policies and laws that reflect, support, and uphold unequal power relations), one may need to know how to construct and support a persuasive argument. While many of us might like to imagine Gearhart's matrix as an alternative, I remain skeptical that a member of the KKK will, of his own accord, simply change his mind (given the proper supportive environment). Granted, the KKK member may not respond to tactics of traditional argument, either. But if he does not want to change his mind, I have a hard time stomaching the idea that I should simply respect his choice.

Jarratt and Gearhart represent an either-or choice in composition and rhetoric, bookends, as I have called them. Either we teach traditional argument (persuasion) or we do not. Perhaps for some instructors the choice is that easy. But for those of us who struggle with this decision there is, thankfully, some middle ground. In the next section, I will start to fill in the space between these bookends, looking at some of the more popular alternatives to traditional argument. I will then come back to the notions of difference and power that are raised by Gearhart and Jarratt, illustrating how many of the alternatives make similar assumptions about negotiating difference.

### **A Number of Alternatives**

In part because even traditional argument is not monolithic, concerns surrounding the proper form and uses of argument, as well as alternatives, are almost as old as traditional argument itself. Plato and the Sophists certainly disagreed about the uses of persuasion. Within the last century, we can look to scholars such as Gertrude Buck, Kenneth Burke, and Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, all of whom have sought a broader conception of argument. Certainly since the New Rhetoric movement of the



1950s scholars have attempted to expand the definition of argument within the (often joint) fields of composition and rhetoric as well as communication. And while not all feminists oppose traditional argument (Jarratt is one obvious example), many look for alternatives to traditional argument often marked by what they see as exertion of control over another. While I have neither time nor space to do justice to the myriad and complex critiques of argument, I would like to take a moment to highlight a few different types of critique. I will then focus more specifically on three common alternatives to traditional argument: Rogerian argument, negotiation, and mediation.

Feminist responses to argument tend to fall along a continuum that we might draw between Gearhart and Jarratt. Many feminist scholars echo Gearhart's concern with what she calls the "intent-to-change." Certainly language, by its very nature, reflects persuasive tendencies. The utterance itself hails a listener, asks that that listener listen, attempts to persuade an audience to pay attention, to consider a viewpoint, to re-see, or to re-think, or even to act. Persuasion itself, then, functions along a continuum. What Gearhart and others object to is the specific *intent-to-persuade*, the specific desire by one party to change another. This is a distinction that I will draw attention to throughout my project.

The intent-to-persuade troubles a number of feminist scholars, including Karen Foss, Sonja Foss, and Cindy Griffin who reference and build upon Gearhart's objection in their discussions of invitational rhetoric—the focus of Chapter 2. Wicca practitioner Starhawk, another source for Foss, Foss, and Griffin, also eschews theories of argument that privilege change and persuasion. Working from what may admittedly seem to be a strange framework to many of us in composition and rhetoric, what Starhawk calls the

“rhetorical system of the Goddess,” she imagines options that seek to change the self, not others (Foss, Foss, and Griffin 188). Starhawk champions a “power-from-within” that “enables individuals to respond creatively and effectively in situations,” and a “power-with” as an “interpersonal power rooted in creative ideas that others find valuable” (Foss, Foss, and Griffin 188).

Sonia Johnson offers a similar, although not identical, challenge to the intent-to-persuade when she writes that persuasion and attempts to control others’ lives is “unethical and coercive,” (52). Joyce Trebilcot voices concern about what she sees as the act of dominance and control inherent in persuasion, and Susan Meisenhelder holds that the way we teach writing, with the focus on persuasion and change, is “promoting a patriarchal mode that encourages students to internalize a rhetorical stance of dominance towards their readers” (186). Gloria Anzaldua, too, in a sometimes more subtle way, asks that the intent-to-change imperative is shifted so that rhetors offer a number of alternatives, as opposed to assuming that their singular viewpoint holds more value than those of the audience. In this case, the intent-to-persuade is still present, but made more multivocal and open-ended than it has often been conceived in traditional argument. Such intent-to-persuade approaches are reflected in Tannen’s “argument culture.”<sup>xvii</sup>

Others object to the *terms* of argument, especially what counts as evidence. Laura Micciche has argued for the role of emotion in the process of meaning-making, asking that we re-consider emotion not only as a means of pathetic appeal, but as performance. Micciche believes that “doing emotion” shifts “our focus away from the idea that we *make* appeals and toward the claim that we *perform* them” (61-2, emphasis in original). Given the fact that emotion has been traditionally linked with femininity and rationality

and reason with masculinity (and reason held in higher regard than “mere” emotion), Micciche’s makes an attempt to re-position emotion as both a viable and persuasive form of evidence as well as “part of what makes ideas adhere,” forcing readers to reconsider the relative importance of emotion (6).

Similarly, in her 2004 book *Personally Speaking*, Candace Spigelman asks that scholars reconsider the role of personal experience in academic writing, drawing attention to the narrow parameters of both evidence in and *forms of* traditional argument. Spigelman explains her view that “personal writing, in its various forms, should be understood as a logical and legitimate mode of argument” (8). Furthermore, she anticipates “modifications in the legacy of traditional argument as a result of using experience-based evidence in academic discourse” (8). Drawing on the work of Kenneth Burke, Spigelman argues that personal experience has been invaluable in terms of identification, consubstantiation, and persuasion (51). Spigelman asks that we remind ourselves of the important role of personal experience in argument.

Spigelman is not alone in her plea for a more rhetorical conception of personal experience, or an expansion of the legitimate forms of argument. Linda Brodkey’s “Writing on the Bias,” performs this interweaving (or sewing) of personal experience with a more traditional academic argument, as do many other academic “memoirs” such as Victor Villanueva’s *Bootstraps* and Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary*. And the entreaty for a more rhetorical sense of personal experience calls on Adrienne Rich’s notion of the politics of location, opening up an incredibly rich and diverse pool of scholarship on the role of the personal in academic writing and, by extension, traditional argument. Scholars such as Linda Alcoff, Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, bell hooks, Gesa

Kirsch and Joy Ritchie, Min-Zhan Lu, Richard E. Miller, and Jacqueline Jones Royster—among others—have all asked that teacher-scholars in composition and rhetoric trouble the divide between personal and professional writing, between emotion and rationality. Of course, it's not as simple as these binaries make it seem. While legitimizing the role of personal experience expands the scope and form of argument, personal experience also runs the risk of essentialism, as well as of silencing others (as when one person's experience trumps or counters another's).<sup>xviii</sup>

Charges of essentialism also haunt feminist attempts in the 1980s to identify a female or feminine style of argument. The most famous of these are perhaps Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule's *Women's Ways of Knowing* and Carol Gilligan's *In A Different Voice*, both of which argue that there are clear differences between the ways in which women and men communicate. We might also note Elizabeth Flynn's "Composing as a Woman," Mary Daly's *Wickedary*, and much work by French feminists, especially Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous, as examples of this line of criticism. While many of these responses deal with issues of language, some also deal with issues of form. In that regard, we might add Lillian Bridwell-Bowles and Pamela Annas to this category, as they encourage students and scholars to experiment with forms outside of the traditional (persuasive) argumentative texts.

This brief survey only scratches the surface of the response of feminists to traditional argument, but I hope that it begins to show the areas on which the majority of these scholars focus: issues of power and change, issues of evidence, and issues of form. The three most popular alternatives to traditional argument in the college composition

classroom—Rogerian argument, negotiation, and mediation—address all three of these areas but center primarily around issues of power, a concern of most feminist pedagogues.

I turn now to these three alternatives because they seem to be those most often offered in popular composition textbooks. Also, each of these alternatives has been taken up by scholars in composition and rhetoric not just as content, but as pedagogical practice. As my project, too, attempts to connect theory to practice in such a way, developing pedagogies based in feminist rhetorical theory, these three alternatives come closest to my own goals for this project. And each suggests a workable classroom practice, serving to expand definitions of argument. Ultimately, however, I will argue that because these three alternatives rely primarily on an intent-to-change, they only go so far in their challenge to traditional theories of argument.

### **Three Popular Alternatives**

Turning our attention once again to popular college composition textbooks, we find three common alternatives to traditional argument: Rogerian argument, negotiation, and mediation. While none of these alternatives has its roots in feminist rhetoric, all of them have been, in some way, adopted by a number of feminist teacher-scholars as productive ways to deal with issues of persuasion and power in the classroom. I begin with Rogerian argument.

Stemming from the “client-centered” approach of psychotherapist Carl Rogers, Rogerian argument (also called Rogerian rhetoric), is based on Rogers’ premise that “the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to

judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statements of the other person, or other group” (qtd. in Young, Becker, and Pike 284-5).<sup>xix</sup> “Real communication,” says Rogers, can only occur if we reduce the sense of threat that results from such judgments and evaluations. This is particularly important in situations in which, as Barry Kroll says, “the heat index of a topic is high” (40). In such emotionally charged situations, the sense of threat tends to be even higher, thereby further blocking any possibility of real communication, true listening, or even change. In such situations, parties on differing sides of a topic often end up “missing each other in psychological space” (285). To remedy this problem, says Rogers, parties need to “listen with understanding” (285). This means that each party must learn to “*see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person’s point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about*” (285, italics in original). Rogers also calls this “empathetic understanding,” or “understanding *with* a person, not *about* him” (286, italics in original).<sup>xx</sup>

This, of course, is not nearly as simple as it may sound. According to Rogers, such a stance requires courage on the part of the listener. In attempting to listen with understanding, the listener runs the risk of entering the speaker’s world so fully that the listener himself is changed. The danger in this sort of change becomes clearer when one remembers that the Rogerian approach stems from Rogers’ work as a psychotherapist. Rogers worries, “if I enter, as fully as I am able, into the private world of a neurotic or psychotic individual, isn’t there a risk that I might become lost in that world?” (287). Few of us in composition and rhetoric find ourselves in such a situation. Still, as James S. Baumlin points out—and as many of us have no doubt experienced—having one’s core

beliefs challenged can be a disturbing experience. As Baumlin explains, “if we change our beliefs, then surely our very identity, our sense of self, becomes threatened along with our belief structures. For whatever security and certainty and stability we perceive in ourselves and in the world rests on the stability of our network or web of beliefs” (33).<sup>xxi</sup> Even if one is not attempting to enter the world of the psychotic, to attempt to see the world from an alternate standpoint can be an unsettling experience.

Rogers also explains that listening with understanding is particularly difficult in just those situations in which such an approach seems most relevant. Rogers believes that empathetic understanding is most useful and important when emotions and tensions run high. Unfortunately, this is just when such an approach is most difficult. When faced with emotionally charged topics such as abortion, capital punishment, or the war in Iraq, it becomes increasingly difficult to refrain from judgment and evaluation. It is perhaps even more complicated in such situations to attempt to enter the world of the other, to see the issue as he or she sees it.

Despite the obstacles to using such techniques, Rogers and his supporters believe that attempts to reduce threat are the best way to facilitate real discussion and understanding. How, then, might one go about this process of threat-reduction? According to Rogers, the most important aspect of such an approach is to “really achieve the other speaker’s frame of reference—to understand his thoughts and feelings so well that you could summarize them for him” (286). A speaker must first be able to accurately summarize the listener’s viewpoint before he can present his own case. Were two parties able to do this, says Rogers, “one could practically guarantee that some reasonable solution would be reached” (286).

Drawing on the 1970 text *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* by Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike, in which a number of Rogers' speeches and works are printed in full, Maxine Hairston was the first to shine light on the work of Rogers within a composition framework. First in her 1976 article "Carl Rogers's Alternative Approach to Traditional Rhetoric," then later in the third edition of Hairston's textbook *A Contemporary Rhetoric*, Hairston highlighted the ways in which a Rogerian approach may benefit the teaching of argument in composition and rhetoric.<sup>xxii</sup> Specifically, Hairston forwarded a five-step process of Rogerian argument, which she included in *A Contemporary Rhetoric*:

1. Give a brief, *objective* statement of the issue under discussion.
2. Summarize in impartial language what you perceive the case for the opposition to be; the summary should demonstrate that you understand their interests and concerns and should avoid any hint of hostility.
3. Make an objective statement of your own side of the issue, listing your concerns and interests but avoiding loaded language or any hint of moral superiority.
4. Outline what common ground or mutual concerns you and the other person or group seem to share; if you see irreconcilable interests, specify what they are.
5. Outline the solution you propose, pointing out what both sides may gain from it. (375-76, italics in original)

Proponents of Rogerian argument in the classroom believe that such an approach minimizes conflict and promotes understanding between interlocutors. Doug Brent calls



it a more “ethical” form of argument and believes that the use of Rogerian argument “helps students learn to connect with other points of view, explore them fully, and place them in a dialectical relationship with their own as part of a process of mutual discovery” (89). And certainly I think many of us can see the benefit in a Rogerian approach to argument. It would be difficult not to applaud Rogers’ desire to promote what he called “real communication” through “listening with understanding” and “empathetic understanding.” And Rogers’ basic theory seems intuitively productive, harkening back, even, to the Golden Rule: treat others as you would like to be treated. The Rogerian approach reminds speakers and writers that it is beneficial, even necessary, to give as much attention and care to others’ viewpoints as we do our own.

Yet critiques of Rogerian rhetoric abound. Some scholars (such as Lisa Ede) ask whether this approach should be called “Rogerian,” wondering what relation it bears to the original ideas of Rogers. Others (such as Andrea Lunsford) wonder if Rogerian argument offers us anything new.<sup>xxiii</sup> Still others (Johannsen, Ede, Karis) question whether or not such an approach is applicable to the writing classroom given its original focus on oral communication. Finally, some feminist scholars have voiced their concerns that Rogerian argument actually reproduces unequal gendered stereotypes.

I am not swayed by critiques of Rogerian rhetoric on the basis of its applicability to writing, or its relation to the original processes of Rogerian psychotherapy. I am, however, concerned by the responses of female students outlined by Phyllis Lassner in “Feminist Responses to Rogerian Argument.” Lassner points out that women, as part of a marginalized group, find it difficult to construct the atmosphere of trust required by Rogerian rhetoric, particularly because they do not always trust the “opposition,” but also

because they already do not feel trusted. Too often, says Lassner, female students “have had to trust and suspend their judgment in an adversarial situation and have found their trust betrayed” (411). Women in her “Women and Writing” class reported feeling “powerless and isolated” as a result of having to suspend their judgment. The attempt to use neutral language (as if such a thing exists) not only reifies the problematic binary between rationality and emotion, it asks that women, yet again, suppress their emotions in order to enter the realm of rational discourse.

And here we see one of the inherent contradictions in Rogerian rhetoric. Meant to address situations in which logical arguments fail, to address situations where emotions run high, Rogerian rhetoric asks that writers and speakers attempt to remove emotion from their repertoires. It asks that students address the issue at hand in impartial, objective language, even when—especially when—the topic is something about which the student feels passionate. Such an approach seems to be asking that students not get so emotional (and given the ways in which women in this culture are associated with emotion and men with rationality, I would say this primarily affects female students). They need to calm down, be rational, and suppress their anger, excitement, or passion. Lassner believes that using the “tentative, unassertive tone” recommended by Hairston (“Alternative” 376) is, for female students, “self-effacing; to validate the position of the other replicates a history of oppression” (Lassner 414).

So while Rogerian argument may ask students to build bridges and look for common ground, it seems to reify the distinction between rational logical arguments and what we might call “merely” emotional arguments. In attempting to remove emotion from the encounter, such an approach could work to privilege one particular form of

evidence and structure—those things defined primarily by white, heterosexual, American, privileged males to be “rational” and therefore persuasive.

Similarly, Rogerian argument may not go far enough in its challenge to traditional forms of persuasion. As we have seen, many feminists have found the focus on an intent-to-change troubling. Some may argue that Rogerian argument functions outside the realm of that intent-to-change, or at least slightly to the side of that realm. Students are asked to listen with understanding, to be empathetic, and to imagine where their audience is also correct. These things seem to ask that students work toward *mutual* understanding and the possibility of *mutual* change, thereby shifting the power dynamic in which a rhetor seeks to persuade an audience. And Rogerian argument may, at times, function in such a way. Yet the description of Rogerian argument and techniques by Young, Becker, and Pike, Hairston, and even Rogers himself hints at a preoccupation with an intent-to-change.

Note, for example, that the final step in Hairston’s original schema is to, “Outline the solution *you* propose, pointing out what both sides may gain from it” (376).<sup>xxiv</sup> Similarly, the final phase in Young, Becker, and Pike’s four-step Rogerian approach is “A statement of how the opponent’s position would benefit if he were to adopt elements of the writer’s position. If the writer can show that the positions complement each other, that each supplies what the other lacks, so much the better” (Young, Becker, and Pike 283). The focus here seems to be on change in the reader, not change in the writer. Young, Becker, and Pike further hold that by utilizing Rogerian methods, the writer can encourage the reader not only to listen to the writer, but can “create in him a willingness to pursue the argument, to reconsider his own position, and perhaps, finally, to change it” (ibid 276).

As we've seen in the previous paragraph, change in the *reader* seems to be the primary goal, as reflected in not only the wording of the final goal, but in the authors' decision to use the term "opponent" throughout their text. While Young, Becker, and Pike may believe that mutual cooperation—not manipulation or persuasion—are central tenets of a Rogerian approach, their constant use of war imagery and terminology makes it difficult to imagine the reader as anything other than an adversary to be conquered. He is, as the authors constantly point out, an "opponent" and, if the writer is successful in making the reader believe that he is understood, the writer "'wins' this part of the argument" (Young, Becker, and Pike 276). Because "the reader too wants to score a victory" he or she is more likely to attempt to understand the writer's position (276). Again: "Inducing the reader to acknowledge that his position has been stated well constitutes a kind of victory; the reader realizes that he too can "win" if he studies the writer's position and states it equally as well" (279). Scholars such as Ede believe that such a change-centered approach bears little resemblance to Rogers' actual ideas.<sup>xxv</sup> Perhaps. But as I am interested in the ways in which we use Rogerian rhetoric in composition studies, I am more concerned with how Rogerian argument *as we currently understand and use it* reflects a desire to change an audience.

I believe this is true in negotiation and mediation as well—two other popular alternatives to traditional argument. Negotiation and mediation are also prevalent in the corporate world, as evidenced by the number of books geared toward negotiating with clients, co-workers, and staff. Mediation is also often imagined in civil cases (property rights, divorce, etc.). But negotiation and mediation have made inroads into the fields of composition and rhetoric, particularly in terms of classroom practice. Catherine Lamb

discusses these strategies in the context of two college writing classrooms in her 1991 CCC essay “Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition.” While Lamb’s essay is now over a decade old, negotiation and mediation are still offered as alternatives to traditional argument in a number of composition textbooks.<sup>xxvi</sup> As Lamb addresses both negotiation and mediation in her essay, and as the two are often joined in textbook discussions, I will discuss both approaches here.

In “Beyond Argument,” Lamb proposes that instructors employ mediation and negotiation as alternatives to what she calls “monologic argument,” which she defines as “the way most (all?) of us were taught to conceptualize arguments: what we want comes first, and we use the available means of persuasion to get it, in, one hopes, ethical ways. We may acknowledge the other side’s position but only to refute it” (283). The goal in monologic argument is to persuade one’s “opponent” to change his or her opinion. In negotiation and mediation, on the other hand, the goal is no longer to “win,” but instead to find a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved (288). In the process of negotiation, parties “brainstorm a number of possible solutions, evaluating them using criteria both sides can accept” (288). In mediation, a third impartial party intervenes when a solution cannot be reached.

Lamb describes the ways in which she incorporates mediation and negotiation in her upper-level writing courses (Technical Writing and Advanced Expository Writing, respectively). In one project, students work in groups of three, mediating a campus issue. After meeting in groups, the “disputants” write a memo to the mediator, describing the issue from their standpoint. Next, the mediator writes a memo to a supervisor, explaining the issue. All three students then co-write a “mediation agreement,” often composed of a

number of clauses, or single goal-oriented sentences. When teaching negotiation, students work in pairs, but write papers from “contrasting position[s]” (290). Next, students meet with the instructor to negotiate a solution to the issue.

It’s important to note, however, that Lamb is not advocating the replacement of traditional argument with mediation and negotiation. Instead, she offers such alternatives as supplements to argument, explaining that “we still need this kind of [traditional] argument . . . at the early stages of resolving a conflict, where both parties need to be as clear as possible about what they think and feel” (286). So mediation and negotiation are proposed as ways to move beyond argument (as implied by the title of Lamb’s article). Lamb also speaks to Jarratt’s concerns about removing conflict from composition classrooms, noting that students need to learn traditional argument “for their survival in other contexts” (286).

Lamb’s alternatives allow space for traditional structures of argument while challenging the primacy of traditional debate in the classroom. Mediation and negotiation, then, seem to answer many of the concerns of feminist teacher-scholars surrounding common practices of teaching argument. Students work collaboratively and cooperatively to produce mediation agreements, students are positioned as knowledge-makers and often engage in the process of negotiation without the input of the instructor (thus reducing the image of the instructor as she-who-is-supposed-to-know), and students are encouraged to find productive solutions to conflict. Yet, upon closer examination, such an approach, like Rogerian argument, presents a number of concerns for writing instructors, and, more specifically, those who practice a feminist pedagogy.

My first concern surrounds the issues of power in the classroom. Lamb explains that she has not yet studied the power dynamics between members of the mediation or negotiation groups but her impression, “from anecdotal evidence, is that most pairs function in a fairly egalitarian way.” She notes, though, that “they [students] also know that’s what I want to hear them say” (291). But Lamb concludes that in such an approach “power is experienced as mutually enabling” (291). My concern is that such groups are not as egalitarian as Lamb hopes.

Drawing on the work of feminist theorist Teresa de Lauretis, Jarratt reminds us that writing classrooms reflect the asymmetrical power relationships that permeate our society. Differences in race, class, gender, sexuality, and class do not simply fall away upon entrance into a mediation or negotiation discussion. Certainly, some groups may function in an egalitarian way, as Lamb hopes, but I imagine many other groups do not. Some students may feel comfortable voicing their opinions, but others may feel (or may actively be) silenced. The cooperation and collaboration that Lamb encourages may exist, but the appearance of collaboration and cooperation may instead be a result of this sort of silencing.

Let me begin by saying that collaboration and cooperation are important and, I hope, obtainable goals in a composition classroom. While asymmetrical power relations do exist in classrooms, this is not to say that instructors or students should abandon their attempts at cooperation or collaboration. Such goals reflect basic tenets of feminist pedagogy, and attempt to begin to work through the inequality that I discuss here. What I offer, instead, is a moment of caution. I hope to remind readers that to overlook issues of

power in the pursuit of cooperation may, in fact, allow such inequality to function quietly beneath the surface of our students' projects.

What Lamb seems to be striving for in such projects is a form of what I'm calling "ideal" consensus. In order to negotiate with each other, or to construct a mediation agreement, students must come to some sort of consensus about the best possible solution. Ideally, this process encourages students to consider numerous alternative solutions, as well as to interrogate power-structures that are functioning as they attempt to do so. Students would also allow for a multiplicity of voices, value each others' opinions equally, and function in an egalitarian way (as Lamb hopes they do). But, as scholars such as Greg Myers and John Trimbur have noted, consensus can often mean erasing difference and silencing dissenting voices. In this way, consensus can have a homogenizing effect, working to minimize alternatives in favor of "commonsense" solutions that arise primarily out of dominant discourses. To combat this notion of consensus, Trimbur offers a form of consensus that is based in difference and dissent. Instead of asking students to *reach* consensus, Trimbur asks that students begin with consensus (he uses a version of the literary canon as an example) and then discuss which voices are left out of these sorts of collective explanations or definitions. Consensus becomes "a critical measure to help students identify the structures of power that inhibit communication among readers (and between teachers and students) by authorizing certain styles of reading while excluding others" (475). It is a starting point, not a goal.

The corrective that Trimbur offers may, in fact, help Lamb's students work in a more egalitarian format. If students were asked not only to reach consensus as they attempt to mediate and negotiate issues, but also to consider the act of consensus itself



they may begin to recognize relations of power as they are functioning not only within the issue that they address, but within their own group dynamic. This might allow for a recognition of difference rather than an erasure of it. As it stands, however, negotiation and mediation may (do not *have to*, but may) serve to disregard issues of difference and power.

Furthermore, negotiation and mediation do not seem to provide alternatives to the desire to change or persuade. Lamb explains the mediation assignment in this way: each of the disputants writes a memo to the mediator “in which they explain the problem as they see it, including an attempt to separate the immediate ways in which the problem has exhibited itself from the underlying issues or interests” (289). The mediator writes a memo to a supervisor, “summarizing the issues for both parties as they appear at that point” (290). Lamb goes on to say that “all three are using the analytical skills we associate with monologic argument, although not with the goal of persuasion” (290). Lamb believes that this sort of writing serves to inform the mediator of the problem and the underlying issues. All three students in the group then work together to write the mediation agreement.

I am confused, though, as to how such writing functions outside the realm of persuasion or intent-to-persuade. In the case of the disputant reports, persuasion seems quite clearly to be the goal. In this situation, each disputant desires a favorable resolution to the problem. One must imagine that the disputant, while perhaps officially attempting to merely inform the mediator of the problem and underlying issues, also hopes to subtly persuade the mediator that hers is the more valid perspective. Lamb seems to imply that disputants are not making explicit arguments for their respective sides, but instead are

presenting the issue from that perspective and analyzing what Krista Ratcliffe might call the “cultural logics” underlying each claim (26). Yet, given the act of mediation, even this reporting and analysis would be an argument about the validity of a disputant’s claim. The most effective strategy might be subtle attempts at persuasion, but persuasion does seem to be the goal.

In the mediation agreement, students must first agree to the steps that they believe should be taken by all parties. It is hard to imagine an attempt to reach consensus within the group that does not involve some form of intent-to-persuade by the involved parties. Furthermore, the mediation agreement itself is a directive document necessitating change in the actions of both disputants. The wording of the portion of a mediation agreement that Lamb includes may disguise this persuasive element by explaining that fraternities and administration both “agree” to certain actions. But in agreeing to restrict the number of parties or begin free shuttle service—the major terms of the mediation agreement these two parties have reached—each disputant has been persuaded to change its course of action. They agree because these actions allow the groups to “resolve their differences,” but outside of the realm of this process of mediation, it seems unlikely that fraternities would simply restrict the number of parties to two a semester and administrators provide free shuttle service (290). In short, the agreement constitutes a change, and that change is a result of an intent-to-persuade, whether by discussion or directive, by the mediating parties.

Admittedly, Lamb explains that traditional argument, “still has a place, although now as a means, not an end. The end—a resolution of conflict that is fair to both sides—is possible even in the apparent one-sidedness of written communication” (281). So for

her, traditional argument with its emphasis on an intent-to-persuade is used in the early stages of negotiation and mediation, when parties must be as clear as possible about their positions and desires. Once those desires have been made clear, parties supposedly work together for the best possible solution. Still, I am unconvinced that negotiation and mediation really do move “beyond argument,” into a realm of equality and community. I worry that, even in the later stages of such processes, the intent-to-persuade can work to silence divergent viewpoints in favor of consensus and similarity.

None of this is to say that composition instructors should not consider mediation and negotiation as viable options in a writing classroom. In fact, both processes (and their corollary, deliberation) provide useful alternatives to traditional forms of argument, and certainly offer alternatives to formal debate. However, in light of the shortcomings of the approach that Lamb describes, instructors need to be cautious in their incorporation of mediation and negotiation in the college writing classroom, particularly as a challenge to monologic or traditional argument. While mediation and negotiation may provide students with an opportunity to work in groups, to consider alternative viewpoints, and to work toward consensus, such processes may inadvertently reinscribe asymmetrical power structures and function to silence students, particularly those who are (or feel they are) not in a position of power.

While Rogerian argument, negotiation, and mediation all seem to offer more egalitarian modes of communication, and while each seems to function outside of the realm of intent-to-persuade or change, I hope I have shown that all three alternatives may actually perpetuate structures of power and persuasion (itself considered by some to be a form of power or control over others). We might imagine these alternatives on a

continuum, with traditional argument and persuasion toward the left side, Rogerian argument somewhere in the middle, and negotiation and mediation further to the right. In terms of this continuum, however, I believe the line continues past traditional argument, heading toward propaganda and even torture (a much more violent means of persuasion). The line also continues past negotiation and mediation, pointing the way toward other alternatives, ones that ask participants to further reduce the intent-to-change, and therefore further reduce the unequal power dynamics that function within most communicative encounters. In doing so, these “alternative alternatives” wrangle with difference without erasing or silencing it and with issues of power without ignoring them. The alternatives I am advocating are rooted in feminist rhetorical theory and are the focus of this project: invitational rhetoric, rhetorical listening, and embodied rhetoric. While hardly “perfect” practices, these three theories can furnish instructors with yet another nonstandard choice in the realm of argument.

## CHAPTER 2

### I INVITE YOU TO CONSIDER: INVITATIONAL RHETORIC AND PEDAGOGY

*“If we keep on speaking the same language together,  
we’re going to reproduce the same history.”*

Luce Irigaray

After the first day of English 503: Persuasive Writing, students are asked to fill out a questionnaire which I call the “student information handout,” explaining their reasons for taking the class, how they see themselves as readers and writers, what they’re excited or nervous about in regards to the course, and anything else they’d like to tell me.<sup>xxvii</sup> Here is how Ellis, a female sophomore, responded to four of the questions:

**Reason for taking this class:** I am a Women’s Studies major and a potential English Minor and would like to learn more about the art of persuasion to help me out in every day life, activism, and for writing papers.

**In regards to this class, what are you excited about?** I am excited to learn about debate, because debate is one of my weaknesses. Also, I anticipate being able to express my ideas more confidently without any fallacy or bias.

**In regards to this class, what are you nervous about?** Although I am excited about debate, I'm nervous to participate in one because I don't yet feel sure of myself in that atmosphere.

**Anything else you'd like to tell me:** I am thrilled that you work with feminism! I discovered feminism last year and was overwhelmed at how passionate it made me feel. I never thought that I would be a feminist because I never really knew much about it. So I am very eager to apply what we learn in class to activism through speech and written word.

There is much we can learn from Ellis's responses, including her assumptions about what a course in persuasion will cover, her attempts to identify with the instructor, her attempts to position herself as a student, her sheer excitement about encountering an instructor (outside of her major) who identifies herself as a feminist, her newfound passion for feminist causes, her eagerness to participate in social activism, and her belief in the social power of speaking and writing. Ellis's responses also illustrate a still-current tension in feminist composition studies surrounding the role of traditional forms of

argument, most notably debate, in composition classrooms. It is this aspect of her responses that I draw attention to here.

As I noted in chapter 1, scholars such as Catherine Lamb, Susan Meisenhelder, Sally Miller Gearhart, Joyce Trebilcot, Carol Gilligan, Elizabeth Flynn, and Pamela Annas have challenged (albeit often in very different ways) the primacy of traditional argument and debate in writing classrooms, arguing that debate and persuasion reflect patriarchal values of dominance and control (Lamb, Meisenhelder, Gearhart, Trebilcot), or that the linear and confrontational nature of traditional argument does not reflect women's epistemologies or primary forms of communication (Gilligan, Annas, Flynn, Belenky et al). Ellis's response reflects these concerns, voicing them, as she does, from the positionality of a student—one who is experiencing first-hand the trepidation of attempting a somewhat foreign discursive form. While eager to learn skills in debate, Ellis is nervous, explaining that her discomfort stems from not “yet feel[ing] sure of myself in that atmosphere.” Debate, according to Ellis, is simply not her realm.

Yet this is a skill that she clearly wants to learn. She explains in her student information handout that she is “excited to learn about debate,” a skill that she believes will help her “express my ideas more confidently.” She is also eager to apply what she learns in class to activist projects involving public speaking and writing. This second aspect of Ellis's response, her eagerness to learn about debate in order to more confidently express herself, particularly in the public realm, reflects concerns of scholars such as Susan Jarratt, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Richard Fulkerson who worry about the effects of eliminating traditional argument from composition classrooms.

As we have seen in my first chapter, scholars such as Lamb and Gearhart believe that teaching antagonistic forms of argument reifies patriarchal values of dominance, competition, and even violence, but Jarratt believes that *not* teaching traditional forms of argument can actually reinforce these same patriarchal values. Jarratt explains that in attempting to reduce or eliminate conflict from classrooms, many instructors reproduce feminized (as opposed to feminist) discursive patterns. In such a classroom environment, students are asked to remain passive, receptive, and quiet, and to simply listen and accept all comments. This, says Jarratt, may challenge the ways in which *male* students have been conditioned to communicate or listen, but it simply reproduces social norms already prescribed for female students: silence, passivity, and compliance.

Furthermore, Jarratt worries that such an approach can create an atmosphere in which all propositions appear valid, and where sexist, racist, or homophobic statements remain unchallenged. This could leave students ill-equipped to effect change in the civic realm. Not only are they asked to avoid conflict when such viewpoints are voiced, they are not given the tools to challenge such issues outside of the classroom. According to Jarratt, students in composition courses need to be instructed primarily in traditional debate and persuasive techniques so that they are better prepared to enter such discussions in the larger social realm.

Faced with both the concerns of scholars such as Lamb and Gearhart and those of scholars such as Jarratt, instructors of composition, particularly those invested in a feminist politics, are left in a double-bind. To teach traditional forms of argument (primarily antagonistic forms of debate) may be privileging a patriarchal form of discourse and, in doing so, may silence the women (and men) in the class who feel



uncomfortable with such language practices. Yet, to ignore traditional debate and persuasion may *also* silence women by asking them not to engage in such exchanges and thus may leave those same students unprepared to effect change in the public realm. The most obvious solution to this double-bind is to step outside of the either-or binary and imagine classroom spaces that allow for both-and approaches. In such classrooms, instructors and students would engage in traditional forms of debate *and* examine language practices that supplement or challenge these language practices. But, of course, nothing is quite so simple.

As we have seen, a number of alternatives to traditional forms of argument exist, including (but not limited to), mediation and negotiation (Lamb), experiential writing (Annas), and diverse discourse (Bridwell-Bowles), most of which seem to advocate for alternatives (not replacements) to traditional debate in the writing classroom. I add to this list Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's notion of *invitational rhetoric*, an alternative to persuasion that questions the primacy of persuasion itself. In doing so, I hope to show that invitational rhetoric provides instructors with alternatives to traditional debate. I believe that invitational rhetoric, as classroom content and practice, also offers a framework for both instructors and students to attempt to better articulate difference and work toward understanding.

This is not to say that invitational rhetoric is a panacea for writing instructors, nor that invitational rhetoric as proposed by Foss and Griffin should be imported *as-is* into any writing classroom. A number of critiques of invitational rhetoric have brought to light some of the theory's contradictions and challenges. In spite of these challenges,

however, I believe that invitational rhetoric presents instructors and students with a communicative tool to be used when persuasion is either undesirable or impossible.

Furthermore, I believe that a pedagogy rooted in invitational rhetoric, what I will call an *invitational pedagogy*, offers one way in which instructors might better hear students with whom they disagree, particularly when traditional debate with a student seems unproductive. Such a pedagogy can also provide students with a format in which to better hear each other as well. An invitational pedagogy constructed from the basic tenets of invitational rhetoric asks that instructors and students find ways to engage with each other outside of an intent-to-persuade framework, and works toward better understanding of both issues and individuals.

In order to illustrate an invitational pedagogy, and the uses of invitational rhetoric in the college composition classroom, I will first define invitational rhetoric and engage the critiques of this feminist rhetorical theory. I will use a framework of *intention* and *reception* to respond to and reframe some of those challenges and to explain how invitational rhetoric can function as a productive supplement to traditional argument in writing classrooms.<sup>xxviii</sup> Finally, I will illustrate the ways in which I incorporated aspects of invitational rhetoric into a primarily sophomore-level persuasive writing course, paying particular attention to the benefits and drawbacks of an invitational pedagogy. Ultimately, I hope to show how particular tenets of invitational rhetoric can prove useful in expanding both definitions of rhetoric and pedagogical approaches to the teaching of rhetoric and writing.

### **Defining Invitational Rhetoric**

In their article, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin base their notion of invitational rhetoric on a number of sources, but draw heavily from the work of feminist scholars Sally Miller Gearhart and Starhawk. Working from Gearhart's (radical) notion that "any intent to persuade is an act of violence" (53), Foss and Griffin argue that rhetoric's historical association with persuasion reflects a patriarchal bias. Rhetoric as persuasion reflects patriarchal values of dominance and change, functioning from within a "power-over" framework in which the rhetor determines self-worth by his or her attempts to control the lives or viewpoints of the listener(s). Objecting to the primacy of persuasion and to the seemingly natural conflation of rhetoric and persuasion, Foss and Griffin propose invitational rhetoric as an alternative.

Invitational rhetoric, as defined by Foss and Griffin, is rooted in the feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination. In this context, equality is defined as "the elimination of the dominance and elitism that characterize most human relationships" (4). The principle of immanent value is based on the idea that all beings are important, valuable, and worthy as they are. They need not be changed nor ranked, and their value need not be proven to external sources. Finally, self-determination reflects the belief that individuals are the experts on their own lives (4). Based in these principles, a rhetor practicing invitational rhetoric does not desire to change or persuade the listener, as the listener, not the rhetor, is seen as the best authority on his or her life. To attempt to usurp this personal authority would violate the principles of equality and self-determination.

A rhetoric based in these three principles is one that challenges the primacy of persuasion. If one begins with the premise that listeners are equal to the rhetor, that listeners need not be changed, and that listeners are the experts on their own lives, then persuasion, in the traditional sense, can no longer be the primary goal of this form of rhetoric. Instead, the goal of invitational rhetoric is better understanding of both the viewpoints offered and of the individuals who hold those viewpoints. Invitational rhetoric, then, is defined as:

an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination. Invitational rhetoric constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does. In presenting a particular perspective, the invitational rhetor does not judge or denigrate others' perspectives but is open to and tries to appreciate and validate those perspectives, even if they differ dramatically from the rhetor's own. (5)

The authors continue by explaining that, "ideally, audience members accept the invitation offered by the rhetor by listening to and trying to understand the rhetor's perspective and then presenting their own" (5). In this ideal situation, both rhetor and audience come to a better understanding of all possible facets of the issue at hand. They also better understand the participants themselves, leading to "appreciation, value, and a sense of equality" (5).

The stated goal of invitational rhetoric is understanding, not change or the intent-to-persuade. Yet, while the invitational rhetor may not intend to change or persuade the listener, Foss and Griffin note that change may indeed occur, drawing attention to the

difference between persuasion and intent-to-persuade that I addressed in my first chapter. In invitational rhetoric, the process of this persuasion is different than in traditional rhetoric in two ways. First, in an invitational context, the rhetor does not intend for this change to happen—there is no intent-to-change, or the intent-to-change is greatly reduced. Second, the audience is free to accept or reject the rhetor's perspective. While this is true in traditional rhetoric as well, in an invitational context whether or not the listener changes his perspective makes no difference to the rhetor. This seems a clear distinction from traditional rhetoric in which the rhetor's goal (intent) is to persuade the listener to accept her claim.

Change, then, is not the goal of invitational rhetoric. But change may happen. Despite the rhetor's intent, the listener may in fact change his opinion or be moved to some sort of action. Whether or not such change happens, however, is of no concern to the rhetor. The direction of change also differs from traditional rhetoric. As I've noted, traditional rhetors attempt to move the audience toward their claim or proposal. Change in the audience is anticipated and desired. In invitational rhetoric, the listener may (or may not) change, but the rhetor is open to change as well. Instead of the audience being moved in the direction of the rhetor, the audience and rhetor may move toward each other, or the rhetor may move toward the audience. In invitational rhetoric, the rhetor, the audience, both, or neither may change and any such result would be viewed as acceptable.

In order to construct a rhetorical situation in which this form of communication might occur, invitational rhetors need to create "external conditions" of safety, value, and freedom (10). In such an environment, audience members and rhetor understand that all

participants will be treated with respect, that differences will be recognized and celebrated (as opposed to erased and silenced), that all opinions can be offered and challenged, and that neither audience nor rhetor is required to change his or her worldview. In this context, invitational rhetors can proceed by “offering perspectives,” (6) a practice in which rhetors simply “present their vision of the world” (7). They do so not in an attempt to persuade a listener, but to invite the listener to enter the rhetor’s world. Whether the listener accepts that offering makes no difference to the rhetor. If both rhetor and audience are truly participating in an invitational format, however, then all listeners become rhetors as well, offering their own perspectives to the group. Through the process of offering and listening to differing perspectives (and the reasons people hold those perspectives), greater understanding of the issue and the participants is created.<sup>xxix</sup>

Foss and Griffin provide a number of examples of offering, both in the verbal and nonverbal realms. First, offering can occur in the academy when scholars present their ideas as tentative, when scholars at a conference ask questions or offer comments in an attempt to learn more about the rhetor’s ideas (rather than to illustrate their own superiority), and when faculty and students participate equally in discussion groups (8). Offering can also take the form of discursive constructions such as, “What would happen if we introduced the idea of \_\_\_\_\_ into this problem?” (8). Questions or comments phrased in this way are not housed in a framework of attack or debate, nor do they seek to persuade the listener to take a particular action or change his or her view; instead, they simply offer the opportunity to imagine other options or viewpoints. Finally, Foss and Griffin use Purple Saturday, a tradition sponsored by the Women’s Caucus at Speech

Communication Association conventions in which conference attendees wear purple to show their support of feminist scholarship, as an example of nonverbal offering (8). Here, those who choose to wear purple are not challenging the opinions of non-feminists, nor are they attempting to persuade others to join feminist causes. Instead, they are simply offering, by their apparel, a feminist perspective.

Foss and Griffin describe another form of invitational offering that they call “re-sourcement.” Borrowing the term from Wicca-practitioner Starhawk, Foss and Griffin explain that re-sourcement is “a response made by a rhetor according to a framework, assumptions, or principles other than those suggested in the precipitating message” (9). By way of example, the authors relate the story of female protestors attempting to protect one woman who is in danger of being beaten by guards. Instead of fighting back, the protestors sit down and begin to chant. Confused, the guards let the woman go. Foss and Griffin explain that the guards, functioning within a framework of violence, expected the women to respond in kind. Instead, they chose to respond from within a framework of nonviolence (10). While the guards could not be said to be practicing invitational rhetoric, the chanting women offered them a new perspective by choosing to respond in a nonviolent manner.

Borrowing an anecdote from Gearhart, Foss and Griffin provide yet another example of invitational rhetoric, one that illustrates the practices of creating external conditions of safety and value, offering perspectives, and re-sourcement. In this example, Gearhart relates an argument she had with a stranger in an airport. Gearhart overheard the man complaining about “all these women and abortion rights” and decided to “take him on” (qtd. in Foss and Griffin 14). Gearhart explains that the argument between the two of

them became so heated that they were almost separated by security. Later, Gearhart was forced to sit next to the same man on the airport shuttle. Not wanting a repeat of the earlier confrontation, Gearhart “decided to try something different” (14). She began to ask the man about his life, attempting to understand both his beliefs as well as the source of those beliefs. Rather than trying to persuade this man (a pro-life chemist who experimented on animals), Gearhart simply listened to him “and he did the same as she shared her own perspectives and experiences with him” (qtd. in Foss and Griffin 14). Later, the two met for a final time in the parking garage, and, as Gearhart explains, “we came together in this terrific hug, both of us in tears, sobbing, crying like babies. I said, ‘You know, I don’t know what has happened here, but my life has been totally changed after today.’ And he said, ‘My life is totally changed, too, and I don’t know what’s happened.’” (qtd. in Foss and Griffin 14).

It is in the moment when Gearhart decides to “try something different,” that Foss and Griffin believe she invokes an invitational rhetoric. In this moment, Gearhart responds to her former “opponent,” not in a confrontational manner (which he is, no doubt, expecting), but instead in a way that is non-threatening and nonviolent. Instead of attacking this man’s views, she attempts to create a safe environment by asking him questions and really listening to the answers. In doing so, she allows him space to offer his perspective. She then offers her own perspective, to which he listens. Neither Gearhart nor the chemist left this encounter having changed their views on abortion (or, one might assume, animal-testing), yet, according to Foss and Griffin, this invitational encounter, “invited understanding and brought them to a new place of awareness of and appreciation for one another” (15). This is the potential benefit of an invitational rhetoric.



All of the examples offered here, from the relatively low-stakes conference presentation to the high stakes protests, involve emotionally charged moments. When Gearhart hears the man in the airport railing against causes that are important, perhaps even vital, to her, she responds in a highly emotional manner. Many of us have perhaps been in similar situations and have chosen to either engage the other as an opponent, as Gearhart did in the first instance, or ignore the situation, perhaps regretting not getting involved. But neither of these options provide much opportunity for understanding. Certainly they do not work toward better appreciation of the other. The shouting match and the decision to just walk on by leave both stakeholders untouched. In neither instance is one encouraged to consider the perspective of the other. In the shouting match, both parties tend to only hear what they want to hear, and use the opinions of the others as grounds for rebuttal, not better understanding. Even in more controlled debates, each party is working toward convincing the other, often making it difficult to hear and understand the opinions of the other.

Of course, this is not always the case. Many of us enter into conversations in which we *are* searching for better understanding. And shouting matches or silence are not our only options. But invitational rhetoric offers another framework for addressing difference *particularly when* shouting or silence *seem to be* our only options. Invitational rhetoric provides strategies for reframing exchanges when tensions run high and when the potential for understanding seems compromised by these tensions. This is true not only in the larger civic realm, but also in the classroom. The strategies of creating a safe environment and offering perspectives help form the basis of my invitational pedagogy, as you will see later in this chapter.

But of course invitational rhetoric has its limitations—limitations that its critics have drawn attention to. In the next section, I will engage the critiques of invitational rhetoric, illustrating the contradictions inherent in Foss and Griffin's theory. I will then use a framework of intention and reception to address those tensions.

### **Critiques of Invitational Rhetoric**

Many of the critiques of invitational rhetoric center around Foss and Griffin's characterization of persuasion. Foss and Griffin maintain that "persuasion is often necessary" (5) and that invitational rhetoric is offered not as a replacement for persuasion, but as an alternative to be used when changing others is not the rhetor's goal. It is difficult, however, to take the authors at their word given not only the title of their piece ("Beyond Persuasion," seems itself to set up the sort of hierarchical structure that Foss and Griffin eschew), but also the strong patriarchal bias which Foss and Griffin attribute to traditional forms of rhetoric. When traditional rhetoric is seen as controlling, even violent, and invitational rhetoric as fostering cooperation and equality, it is difficult to imagine invitational rhetoric as an option simply equal to persuasion. This is also hard to believe given the volatile nature of Gearhart's article "The Womanization of Rhetoric," on which much of Foss and Griffin's work is based. As I noted in chapter 1, Gearhart argues that "any intent to persuade is an act of violence" (53).

Richard Fulkerson points to a number of problems with this view of persuasion. First, he draws attention to the problematic nature of viewing any act of persuasion as an act of violence. He wonders if "Gearhart, Foss and Griffin really want to maintain that when Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' he was engaged in a

patriarchal act of violence, or that the speeches of Susan B. Anthony were themselves immoral imposition” (205). If any attempt at persuasion or change is an act of violence, then anti-war protests and Take Back the Night rallies would also be categorized as patriarchal and violent—in Gearhart’s terms, the same kind of violence as war and rape itself. Clearly, this is a difficult claim to support.

Fulkerson also worries that invitational rhetoric, with its emphasis on the equal offering of perspectives, may lead to a sort of moral relativism, devoid of analysis or critique (206). If all perspectives are given the same weight and attention, and if all perspectives are deemed equally valid, then the viewpoints of a racist and those of a civil rights activist must be seen as equally legitimate. Celeste Michelle Condit raises this same concern. She believes that invitational rhetoric, in its charge against persuasion, presumes that “all aspects of audience members’ beliefs are integral to their identity, and therefore ought to be treated as authentic and correct, regardless of how egregious their character” (93). In other words, if “you need only be what you are,” (qtd. in Foss and Griffin 4), and if rhetors cannot presume to influence the decisions that individuals make, then those who hold racist, sexist, or homophobic beliefs are simply entitled to those beliefs. The racist viewpoints held by a member of the Ku Klux Klan, within the safe environment of offering proposed by Foss and Griffin, cannot be challenged because the KKK member is seen as inherently valuable and the best authority on his own life.

In an article entitled “Transforming Rhetoric Through Feminist Reconstruction,” Foss and Griffin, in conjunction with Karen A. Foss, respond to Condit’s critique. Foss, Griffin, and Foss explain that, unlike Condit, they don’t believe rhetors are in a position to determine what is or is not authentic or integral, nor do they believe that rhetors can

judge what is “egregious” in another’s character (123).<sup>xxx</sup> They “believe that individuals should be allowed self-determination so they may make their own decisions about what they want to believe and how they want to live. Individuals make choices in these areas for reasons that make sense to them, and our initial inclination is to try to understand and respect others’ beliefs rather than to impose our judgment on them and to attempt to change them” (123). Yet, as Fulkerson points out, it is difficult to imagine that a feminist rhetor could be faced with an abusive husband or a homophobic mother and *not* feel as though such actions or beliefs are “egregious.” The question, then, is what does an invitational rhetor *do* when faced with those whose opinions or life choices are at odds with feminist viewpoints?

Foss, Griffin, and Foss address this issue as well, acknowledging “that many people hold views with which we strongly disagree and that we wish were different—racist and sexist views, for example” (123). They explain that “trying to understand a racist’s or a misogynist’s position and inviting that individual to consider alternative perspectives [. . .] is one approach to interacting with such individuals—one that is no less viable or predictive of change than is persuasion” (123). Foss, Griffin, and Foss advocate an attempt to understand racist or sexist views and, in an invitational format, hope that the listener will also understand the views of the rhetor who is (presumably) not (or less) racist or sexist.

In this way, Foss, Griffin, and Foss attempt to speak back to Fulkerson’s critique, arguing that invitational rhetoric can, in fact, transform society. It can do so in at least two ways. First, because an invitational rhetor attempts to create a safe space in which multiple viewpoints can be heard, the offering of alternative perspectives in such an

environment might increase the chances that such alternatives are seriously considered by the listener. In other words, the anti-abortion scientist who Gearhart meets in the airport would probably not have considered Gearhart's perspectives were they to have continued their "discussion" in a format of debate and intent-to-persuade. Each participant might have resisted this intent-to-persuade, digging deeper into his or her own perspective in order to best the other. In the invitational format, both participants are better positioned to hear and consider the others' perspective, thereby increasing the opportunity for real understanding and reflection. Although neither party in the Gearhart example seems to have changed his or her view, each may have more respect for the other and may, in turn, reconsider the complexity of these issues. And in such invitational frameworks, rhetor or listener *may* be moved to change his or her view. This is simply not the primary goal of the rhetor.

This new rhetorical theory also "involves the creation of spaces and situations that, by their inherent structure and function, embody a different reality" (Foss and Griffin "A Feminist" 337). By offering new discursive forms and new communicative spaces, Foss and Griffin are trying to present new possibilities for social interactions, ones that are more egalitarian and validating. Foss, Griffin, and Foss say that "[w]ith [bell] hooks, we seek to challenge the entire structure of domination, seeking to transform relationships and the larger culture," (129). Invitational rhetoric, with its focus on understanding and cooperation rather than persuasion and mastery, "may resist an oppressive system simply because it models an alternative to the system" (Foss and Griffin "Beyond" 16-17). With invitational rhetoric, Foss and Griffin are trying to literally speak a new reality into being.

Fulkerson, however, condemns invitational rhetoric on the grounds that “viewpoints are shared, exchanged, understood, *but no action is taken*” (206, emphasis mine). For Fulkerson, proposing an alternative discursive format does not go far enough to combat unequal social power structures. The moral relativism that Fulkerson sees in invitational rhetoric, coupled with the invitational rhetor’s unwillingness to attempt to change an audience member, seems to put the invitational rhetor in a position to not only ignore, but potentially condone discrimination and hate speech. Foss and Griffin contend that in an invitational format, “all presuppositions can be challenged,” not with an intent to persuade, but with an intent to understand and offer alternative viewpoints. Additionally, Foss and Griffin hold that to really value a viewpoint means that one takes it seriously enough to engage with it. So such engagement could allow for a space in which to challenge racist or sexist viewpoints. Yet, because ultimately those viewpoints must be valued, and because no participant need be changed, in the ideal space of an invitational exchange no specific action is taken to change racist or sexist modes of thinking, at least not action as we usually imagine it.

It should be noted, however, that Foss and Griffin do not offer invitational rhetoric as a *replacement* for traditional rhetorical practice. In fact, the authors say, “there are times when rhetoric, as traditionally conceived, is the most appropriate option, and racist and sexist behavior on the part of individuals may constitute an exigence for the use of traditional rhetoric. We do not offer invitational rhetoric as an ideal, nor do we suggest that it ought to be used on all occasions” (“Beyond” 123). Still, invitational rhetoric provides a means of engaging with difference when the goal of the exchange is not change and persuasion. It also offers a means of engaging with difference when

debate has failed (as is the case with the Gearhart example), seem bound to fail (as in the case of the protestors and soldiers), or communication has broken down. When tensions run high, particularly due to a difference of opinion often based in lived experience or standpoint, invitational rhetoric offers strategies for attempting to hear and be heard.

Given that change is not the primary goal of invitational rhetoric, and that Foss and Griffin offer their proposal for invitational rhetoric not as a replacement but as a supplement for more traditional forms of rhetorical practice, the question of whether or not invitational rhetoric can effect change seems misdirected. Instead, we might ask when one should choose to use invitational rhetoric and when one might choose traditional rhetorical approaches. The answer to that question takes us not only back to the notion of intent, but also to reception.

### **Intention and Reception in Invitational Rhetoric**

As we've seen, Foss and Griffin offer invitational rhetoric as an alternative to traditional forms of rhetoric when the rhetor's *intent* is not to change the listener. While persuasion may occur, it is never the goal of invitational rhetoric. It is in the difference between intent and result that Foss and Griffin base their notion of invitational rhetoric, and we can see here the debt to Gearhart's work in this distinction between change and intent-to-change. The question then becomes whether or not it is possible to communicate without intending to persuade. In other words, is there such a thing as communication without persuasion?

The simple answer is yes . . . mostly. If a colleague asks if I prefer coffee from the student union or the campus coffee cart and I tell him that I prefer the latter, I'm not

attempting to persuade him that the coffee cart on campus brews a better cup of coffee. If he asks where we should *get* coffee, then I may intend to persuade him to order from the coffee cart rather than the student union. Simply offering my perspective on such a low-stakes issue, however, seems to function primarily outside of persuasive intent.<sup>xxxi</sup> But this is not where Foss and Griffin imagine invitational rhetoric to be useful. Instead, they see invitational rhetoric as an alternative to persuasion in higher-stakes arenas, evidenced by their examples: the abortion “debate” between Gearhart and the chemist, the women fighting for their safety at a protest, Purple Saturday. These are examples of high-stakes issues, including reproductive rights, bodily safety, and gender equality. It is within these contexts that Foss and Griffin imagine invitational rhetoric can offer an alternative to intentional persuasion.

I am not convinced that a pure alternative to persuasion is possible, given the potential for persuasion in all discourse. However, as I have noted in Chapter 1, I do believe that there are varying degrees of *intent-to-persuade*. But in considering the usefulness of invitational rhetoric, the distinction between unintentional and intentional persuasion may be less important than the *results* of such discursive practice. I believe that critics ultimately need to shift their focus from the intent of invitational rhetoric—to persuade or not to persuade—to issues of reception. To illustrate, let us first look at the issue of intention in the examples that Foss and Griffin offer.

If the intent in invitational rhetoric is not to change the listener, and if the examples offered by Foss and Griffin are in fact examples of invitational rhetoric, then one must conclude that in each example, the rhetor was not intending to change the listener. Change, or persuasion, could not be the desired effect if these examples are to



function as Foss and Griffin hope they do. I am uncertain, however, that these examples illustrate the lack of *intent* (to persuade) that Foss and Griffin identify. Certainly, intent is a slippery subject. Neither I nor Foss and Griffin can say for certain what these women did or did not intend with their words or actions. Yet it seems much more likely that the women who attempted to protect another protestor from being beaten by their guards did, in fact, hope to change the actions of the guards. To simply “re-source” the situation by working from within a nonviolent perspective does the endangered woman little good if the guards do not also decide to proceed from within the same nonviolent framework, if only for a moment. Certainly the women may not have believed that their chanting would change the guards forever, but it seems that their intent in that moment was to secure the safety of the endangered protestor by persuading the guards to let the woman go. And in that, they were successful.

It seems difficult to believe, as well, that Gearhart did not hope to persuade the anti-abortion chemist she encounters at the airport. In fact, given the initial shouting match between the two, her intent to persuade seems relatively clear—or as clear as intent can be in such situations. The question of whether or not Gearhart is still attempting to change or persuade the chemist when she decides to “try something different” is less clear. But, given her admittance that what she reveals about the man is “worse than [she] had originally thought” because “he was a chemist, and he had experimented on animals. He had grown up as a hunter”—all things to which Gearhart is morally opposed—it seems difficult to believe that Gearhart would not want to, if possible, change this man’s mind (qtd. in Foss and Griffin “Beyond” 14).

That's the key: she might try to change this man's mind *if it were possible*. In this case, Gearhart seems not to believe that such change is possible, at least not in the limited amount of time she has with the man, and not following her earlier failed attempts at persuasion. If it were possible for the female protestors to convince the guards to put down their weapons once and for all, I think most readers would agree that they would do so. But that does not seem possible in the situation that Foss and Griffin relate.

But, as I have said, in discussions of invitational rhetoric, intent is less important than reception. Whether or not the protestors or Gearhart intended to change or persuade their audiences matters less than the context in which such an invitational rhetoric occurred. To shift our focus from intent to reception allows rhetors to recognize the real power of invitational rhetoric. Whether or not any of us can approach such charged situations not wanting to persuade another of our viewpoint becomes less crucial to our attempts to actually hear and be heard. It is in this reception that invitational rhetoric functions as a true alternative.

Let us return to the case of Gearhart and the chemist. As we see from the initial encounter in the airport (in which their "discussion" became so heated that they were nearly separated by security guards), neither Gearhart nor the chemist was willing, or perhaps even able, to change her or his mind. In the midst of this shouting match, there was simply no reception, and perhaps no chance of reception. Neither Gearhart nor the chemist could hear the other. In such an environment, there is not even the *possibility* of change, regardless of the intent. There is also no possibility for more complete understanding of either the issue of abortion or the people involved in this discussion. In this heated moment of debate, as a pro-life advocate engages a pro-choice advocate, there

is no dialogue, no conversation, no movement, no understanding, no change, no chance of change, no chance of understanding. There is nothing but anger and frustration. The distance between the two, it seems, is simply too great. They are shouting over too-large a chasm. While much may be said, nothing is heard.

When Gearhart decides to try something different, to try what Foss and Griffin identify as invitational rhetoric, by creating a space in which the chemist does not feel threatened or judged or insignificant, Gearhart reduces the tension. When she becomes quiet and attempts to hear the chemist, she too can be heard. And that hearing—not the presence or absence of intentional persuasion, not whether or not such persuasion is violent—that moment of hearing, of listening, of trying to understand, the creation of a space where such hearing can happen, that is crux of invitational rhetoric.

Perhaps this is an idealized fantasy. In fact, one of the critiques of invitational rhetoric is that it assumes an ideal situation in which all participants are on equal footing and therefore feel free not only to offer their perspectives, but also to accept or reject any perspective offered. Kathleen Ryan and Elizabeth Natallé draw on the work of bell hooks to point out that “pure prejudice, in all its virulent forms, simply renders problematic such an ‘unconditional’ relationship between rhetor and audience” (82-3). In defense of invitational rhetoric, Ryan and Natallé note that they “support invitational rhetoric’s claim for these ideal conditions [of equality] to the extent that rhetors must *strive* for these conditions if constructive understanding and transformation is the goal” (83, emphasis in original). Invitational rhetoric may in fact work best in situations in which all involved can participate equally, therefore perhaps ignoring the power-structures invoked by differences in race, class, gender, or sexuality, but it does so (if it does so) in an

attempt to create situations in which participants function *as if* social positionalities were not hierarchically ranked. The attempt to act *as if* may itself help create those safe spaces. But in the meantime, I also believe that invitational rhetoric offers a means of communicating across difference. It offers at least the *possibility* of hearing and being heard, the possibility of clearer reception.

It is to this potential that I now turn. In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the possible uses of invitational rhetoric in writing classrooms by illustrating the ways in which I incorporated aspects of this rhetoric into a sophomore-level persuasive writing class. I will place my proposal for an invitational pedagogy in the context of the scholarly conversation surrounding the role of invitational rhetoric in the writing classroom and will conclude by offering suggestions and implications for writing instructors. Again, however, I find it important to emphasize a number of caveats: 1) that I imagine invitational rhetoric and an invitational pedagogy as a supplement to, not a replacement for, traditional approaches to teaching argument, 2) that I do not believe invitational rhetoric or pedagogy to be a panacea, and 3) that I do not believe invitational rhetoric or pedagogy to be appropriate for all situations or all classrooms. I do, however, believe that an invitational pedagogy offers a means of engaging with difference in a way that makes hearing and understanding more likely, particularly in moments when tensions run high.

### **Invitational Rhetoric and Pedagogy in the Writing Classroom**

Given the radical nature of invitational rhetoric, coupled with the interesting potential of this rhetorical theory, the scholarly engagement with this topic seems

surprisingly limited. Ryan and Natalie point out that invitational rhetoric “remains in the background in both our theorizing and teaching of rhetorical theory, public speaking, and composition” (69). In other words, it is rarely discussed in the rhetoric, communication, or composition communities. Ryan and Natalie argue that invitational rhetoric has not garnered much response primarily because it lacks theoretical grounding. I disagree. I contend that invitational rhetoric has not received much attention, particularly in relation to pedagogy, because there has been no discussion about how to operationalize such a theory in the classroom.

There are a few exceptions. Ryan and Natalie, for example, do note that “as teachers we can practice invitational rhetoric ourselves,” but they fail to explain how (86). Cheryl Glenn also references invitational rhetoric in terms of classroom practice, primarily by association. In her recent book *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Glenn places invitational rhetoric squarely in the realm of the rhetorics of silence, explaining that invitational rhetoric asks that both sides takes turns “at being productively silent” (156). In order to foster real listening, both rhetor and audience have to choose to remain silent. Glenn believes that strategic silence—rhetorical silence—can be used productively in the classroom (and elsewhere), and she concludes her book by calling for further research on rhetorical silence in the classroom. Given that Glenn sees silence as one important aspect of invitational rhetoric, one might conclude that this call for further research includes studies of invitational rhetoric in the classroom as well. As of yet, there are no such studies in publication. What I offer in the remainder of this chapter is my own attempt to answer Glenn’s call and to situate invitational rhetoric in the writing classroom.

One way in which to do so is to incorporate invitational rhetoric as content in a writing class so that students can begin to understand and practice the strategies of this rhetoric and to engage the theory itself. In my English 503 class, students read Foss and Griffin's article "Beyond Persuasion," and we discuss definitions and strategies of invitational rhetoric. Students then participate in an online forum where they continue our classroom discussion. They ask whether or not conversation can exist without persuasion, they talk about the uses and drawbacks of invitational rhetoric, and they compare invitational rhetoric to Rogerian rhetoric (about which they have also just read). And, as you will see later in this chapter, students and I attempt to put invitational rhetoric into practice when discussing what I call a "hot-button topic." But if we are to take invitational rhetoric seriously as a useful classroom strategy, I believe that we must also imagine ways to operationalize this rhetoric as pedagogical practice, thereby creating an *invitational pedagogy* based in the central tenets of invitational rhetoric.

An invitational pedagogy may at first seem like contradiction in terms. Given that Foss and Griffin base much of their theory on Gearhart, and given Gearhart's contention that teaching is an act of violence, it seems difficult to imagine an approach to teaching in an invitational format. And in fact I have a hard time imagining an entire course taught in an invitational style.<sup>xxxii</sup> But, just as Foss and Griffin explain that invitational rhetoric is an alternative to persuasion, not a replacement, an invitational pedagogy is only one part of a larger pedagogical practice.

An invitational pedagogy as I imagine it can be particularly useful to instructors when encountering strong resistance from students. This often occurs when the class is discussing hot-button topics like race, class, gender, sexuality, abortion, capital

punishment . . . we can all fill in multiple terms to help generate this list. But it may also be useful in terms of grade or policy disputes, political clashes (as is often the case when instructors profess a feminist stance or pedagogy and students resist such a stance), or even disagreements over texts. It can be useful in such situations because, as I hope I have shown, invitational rhetoric provides a means to redirect the terms of the conversation, reducing tension and, ideally, making it easier for rhetor and audience—in this case student and teacher or teacher and student—to work toward clearer understanding. Because invitational rhetoric attempts to reduce the sense of threat often felt by readers or listeners in emotionally charged conversations, an invitational pedagogy can help to reduce the sense of threat, and therefore defensiveness, often expressed by students in the face of an instructor whose views differ from their own.

A pedagogy rooted in invitational rhetoric also changes the dynamic of the classroom, if only slightly. While in most institutional settings, students and teachers can never equally share authority in the classroom (because of the necessity of evaluating work and enforcing program policies), feminist pedagogues have long sought to share at least some authority. Often those practicing a feminist pedagogy do so by putting desks into a circle, reducing the appearance of the teacher at the “head” of the class; practicing problem-posing and discussion formats instead of (solely) lecturing; encouraging students to respond to each other, and not simply the teacher; and encouraging students to respond to each others’ writing, so that the instructor is not the only reader for such work. Students in these classrooms may also help to design classroom policies, choose readings, and even help design and evaluate assignments. Because invitational rhetoric works from the belief that all opinions are valuable and that individuals are the best authorities on

their own lives, working from within an invitational framework can help supplement such pedagogical strategies by reducing the appearance of instructor as sole authority or as the keeper (and evaluator) of the “correct” answer or approach. An invitational pedagogy, then, opens up the *potential*, at least, for voicing different opinions in a less threatening environment.

This is not to say that traditional classrooms *are* threatening, only that I believe they can sometimes feel that way to students. I certainly remember them feeling that way, even in classrooms in which my professors were practicing feminist pedagogies (although those classrooms often felt *less* threatening). What do I mean by threatening? I do not mean to imply that non/less-threatening classrooms are those in which conflicts do not arise or are quickly stamped out. I also do not mean to imply that non/less-threatening classrooms are those in which statements are not challenged. Instead, this sense of threat refers to the feeling of having your core beliefs challenged by an authority figure in front of a group of your peers. At times, such a challenge can be productive, calling on students to examine the sources and implications of their opinions, and leading to a deeper understanding of why they hold the viewpoints they do.

At other times, however, this sense of threat can shut down communication, silence students, and foster resentment between student and teacher. It is particularly in these moments that an invitational pedagogy may provide an alternative approach to engaging differing viewpoints. Additionally, a practice of invitational rhetoric can help students to reduce the sense of threat and tension in potentially volatile conversations with each other.



But what does such a pedagogy look like? An invitational pedagogy as I've imagined it proceeds from these basic invitational concepts:

- Persuasion is not the primary goal. Students and instructor, while recognizing that it may be difficult or impossible to remove all intent-to-persuade, agree to work toward understanding as a primary outcome.
- Whenever possible, students and instructors will attempt to understand the reasons behind differing viewpoints.
- Individuals are the best authorities on their own lives. This means that students do not have to adhere to the instructor's politics or beliefs, or the politics or beliefs of other students, in order to be heard or validated.
- Students and instructor are free to accept or reject any viewpoint.
- All propositions will be entertained and all statements (including the instructor's) can be challenged.
- The exchange will not be graded or evaluated in any way.

Again, I want to draw attention to the fact that I do not imagine an invitational pedagogy as I construct it here as the only approach to teaching. Within most institutional contexts, grading must occur. And there are many instances in which persuasion is desired and warranted. But when instructors and students, or even students and students, find themselves at an impasse, an invitational pedagogy can be useful.

I also want to note that, as is the case with invitational rhetoric, an invitational pedagogy rests in some ways on an idealized situation—one that simply does not exist. Power relations in the classroom are not equal, perhaps *cannot* be equal, and therefore it is difficult for students to trust that they are free to voice their opinions and that such

opinions will not be graded. And while the instructor may put away the gradebook for the purposes of an invitational discussion, savvy students might recognize that what they say in that discussion could be held against them at a later time. There are ways around this issue: students and instructors could participate in contract grading or students could wholly self-evaluate. This format, however, does not work for all students, nor does it work in all university contexts. In the face of such power-dynamics, instructors must attempt—as they do on an almost daily basis—to evaluate students on the quality of their work and not the content of their views. While sometimes difficult, it is hardly a new struggle.

It can, however, be difficult to convince students that they will (to the best of an instructor's ability) not be judged on the viewpoints that they voice in an invitational discussion (or in any other discussion, for that matter). The best any instructor can do is to offer assurance, put away the gradebook for a moment, and provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in unevaluated discussions. In such a way, an instructor may engender the kind of safe(r) environment that Foss and Griffin argue is essential for the joint offering of perspectives.

One of the ways in which students and I learn to better trust each other is simply by practicing this notion of offering perspectives. Working from a discussion board prompt, students and I sit in a circle and attempt to simply offer perspectives on the chosen topic (two semesters ago, for example, students and I offered perspectives on invitational rhetoric itself). Students take turns offering perspectives and I offer mine as well, taking care not to lecture or attempt to persuade, and trying also to admit that I'm

not yet sure where I stand.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Once everyone has had a chance to voice his or her perspective, we move on to an unrelated writing exercise.

Often, students seem confused and sometimes even upset by the lack of resolution that they feel at the end of this first offering of perspectives. Occasionally a student will ask whether or not we're going to "finish" our discussion. I explain for our purposes it is finished, although they're welcome to continue the conversation on the discussion board. The confusion in this moment seems to stem from students' expectation that I, as instructor, will provide some sort of meta-commentary. Students want me to choose a side, validate a viewpoint, "wrap up" what we've been talking about. They expect me to publicly recognize those who are "right," which usually means those who agree with me, the instructor. My refusal to do so does frustrate some of them, but it also begins the acclimation process whereby students, at least in some instances, become more comfortable with the lack of resolution that often characterizes our invitational engagements. Students and I practice this form of offering for the first few weeks of the semester, during which time I repeatedly explain that they are not being judged or graded on the perspectives that they offer. Occasionally I ask students to freewrite about the experience of offering and listening, but those freewrites are not shared with the class.

After we've practiced this format, we begin, as a class, to allow for challenges to all perspectives. This adds an element of tension to the conversation, particularly at first. It is difficult for students to challenge perspectives without slipping into more traditional debate formats. I remind them that while it may or may not be possible to proceed without intending to persuade each other, as a class we have agreed that no one need accept or reject any proposition. A successful conversation, then, needs to be evaluated in

different terms. I remind them that no one can “win” or “lose” in this type of conversation but that we’re all attempting to come to a better understanding of the issue and of each other. To that end, we attempt to frame our challenges in Foss and Griffin’s terms, asking “What would happen if we introduced this into the conversation?” or “Has anyone considered how this perspective changes our conversation?” “What about this viewpoint?” We also ask each other about the sources of our beliefs, trying to better understand, as Gearhart did, why each person holds the opinions that they do. Students can abstain from answering any question with which they feel uncomfortable.

During these practice sessions, I stress the intention behind such offerings, which I believe is clearer and more complete understanding rather than a stated intent-to-persuade. We also talk about the reception of such questions, playing with the differences between telling a listener what they *should* do, thereby usurping the listener’s authority, and offering alternatives. In such conversations I pay particular attention, too, to how often I am speaking. Because I do not want to be positioned as the voice of authority, I try not to let my voice overpower the voices of the students. These are, admittedly, fleeting moments where I do not need to play the role of teacher in such a direct way. In these moments, I try to join the conversation and offer perspectives with students, as opposed to directing suggestions to them.

The real challenge, though, happens when the stakes are raised and the conversation topic becomes more contentious. I offer here one such example. I hope that this example illustrates the usefulness of integrating invitational practices into the classroom.

### **Invitational Rhetoric and “The *Black Betty* Controversy”**

During the spring semester of 2006, the student body at the University of New Hampshire found itself embroiled in a bitter controversy surrounding a song traditionally played during UNH men’s home hockey games. Between periods, the song *Black Betty*, as performed by the band *Ram Jam* was played as a sort of rally-cry for the players and the crowd. In 2006, however, the university banned the song amidst charges of racism. For those unfamiliar with the song, the title itself is enough to incite charges of racism, but lyrics such as “She really gets me high / You know that’s no lie / She’s so rock steady / She’s always ready” contribute to this controversy. The ban sparked an uproar. Students and alumni wrote letters to the student newspaper, students constructed a “Free Black Betty” website, and “Free Betty” signs could be found in many buildings on campus. Seeing an opportunity to discuss issues of race at the local level (a topic that students and I were currently exploring in class), I put aside our reading for the day and asked students instead to discuss their reactions to what had come to be known as “The Black Betty Controversy.”

I was unprepared for the result.

What began as a few comments about the “stupidity” of the proposed song ban quickly escalated into a full-blown shouting match. One female student, who I’ll call Susan, accused a male student, Josh, of being insensitive, uneducated, and racist. Completely unprepared as I was for what ensued, I found myself standing at the front of the room, waiving my arms, shouting “ad hominem attack! Ad hominem attack!” Not, I must admit, my shining moment.

Happily, I had asked this question near the end of the class period on the last day of class that week. I managed to quiet the shouting students and asked students to stop by my office the next afternoon to pick up reading packets for the next class period. I explained that I would cancel the next two reading selections and substitute readings on The Black Betty Controversy. I printed relevant articles and letters from the online version of the student newspaper, printed the lyrics to the *Ram Jam* version of the song as well as lyrics from Lead Belly (the man credited with the original version) and Nick Cave, and included some historical information about the song itself. Students were to read this information and come prepared to discuss on Monday.

And prepared to discuss they were. I began by asking the class what surprised them in the readings that they had done for that day. Most were surprised by the history of the song. While many argued that 1) you couldn't even hear the lyrics in the hockey arena, 2) you couldn't really make out the lyrics of the *Ram Jam* version even if you could hear them, and 3) the lyrics didn't really mean anything, some students noted that the fact that "Black Betty" may have been the name for a whip used both in penitentiaries and during slavery seemed to lend some credence to the suggestion that the song had racist undertones.

Again, shouting ensued. Josh, known for his spirited contributions to discussions, called that "bullshit." He wanted to know how a whip could, in the context of the song, "have a baby"? (The *Ram Jam* version of the song includes the line "Black Betty had a child.") Susan, again, called Josh a racist and the shouting began anew. Some students claimed that the whole thing was "stupid," that it didn't matter if Black Betty was a woman, a whip, or a paddy-wagon (another theory about the source of the name),

because it's "just a song," and people were "over-reacting" if they thought that the song should be banned from hockey games. Other students countered that it was easy for the "privileged white men" in the room (and on the larger campus) to make those claims. Others thought that the name "Black Betty" just "sounds racist." But Tucker, a hockey player, explained that the song was tradition, and had been played for years, prompting Susan to ask whether or not racism was a tradition of the hockey team as well.

Josh and Susan, as you can perhaps see from my brief synopsis, tended to dominate this conversation. Other students, like Tucker, participated, but many remained silent. And while Susan, Josh, and a few others continued to debate this issue, many students looked incredibly uncomfortable, deliberately avoiding eye contact with the two nonwhite students in the room, who also remained silent. It's possible that some students were silent because they weren't paying attention, but I believe that many were silenced by the tension, by the outspoken students in the class, by their fear of saying the "wrong thing" in a discussion about race and oppression. Many of these students were looking at me, seemingly wanting me to intervene and, I assume, tell them what I thought, to tell them the right way to think about this complicated issue. But I didn't want to do that. I also didn't want to let these students remain silenced (which is what seemed to be happening), nor did I want what felt like an unproductive shouting match to continue. Even though I had tried to get the students to analyze this controversy from a traditional standpoint, examining traditional rhetorical appeals as well as claims, grounds, and warrants, it simply wasn't happening. Students were flat-out mad.

"Okay," I interrupted, "let me ask this: Is anyone persuaded by these arguments? Anybody change their minds?"

Everyone shook their heads no. “What might persuade you, what kind of evidence?”

The room was silent, until one student admitted that nothing would persuade him to change his mind. “Well then,” I suggested, “let’s try something different.”

I asked that students take a moment to write about their position on this issue and why they held that position. Where did that belief come from? I told students that they would not be required to share their writing, but they would be given the opportunity to speak. They could either read what they had written, use it to spark their comments, go “off script,” or pass. After five to seven minutes of writing I asked students if we could attempt an offering of perspectives. Many students agreed, so we went around the room, simply offering perspectives and challenging them using Foss and Griffin’s format (“What might happen if?”). In this moment, I, too, had to shift my perspective. Believing the song to be racist, it had been difficult for me not to intervene in the earlier argument, but, having done so with Josh before, I knew the probable outcome. Josh and I would throw rationales back and forth, and I would reify for him my position as a “femi-nazi,” something he had, in fact, said was a better term to describe feminists. But working from an invitational pedagogy, in this moment I needed to let go of that desire and intent to persuade him and others in the class. I needed to try to entertain all positions, and to keep in mind that I didn’t really know why students in the class agreed or disagreed with me—there might be reasons that I wasn’t imagining. It is not an easy place for me to inhabit, to be honest, but an invitational pedagogy functions as a reminder to work toward understanding, especially when one is perhaps least inclined to do so.



As students went around the room and offered different perspectives, the tension in the room started to ease. It wasn't gone, but at least it felt like we might be able to hear each other. Because students had practiced this format and knew what was expected, perspectives were offered in an environment of relative safety where students understood that they did not have to change their minds. Tucker, the hockey player, explained that they had played this song at home games since he started playing hockey for UNH. He revealed that this sense of tradition and ritual, marked by such things as playing the same song at the same time for years, was one of the things that made hockey so important to him. It helped him feel like part of a team, part of something larger. Tucker's perspective helped me to understand the "tradition" argument—an argument that held very little weight with me up to that point—and to understand his vehement response to Susan and others in the class. In response, a student "wonder[ed] if hurting someone is worth tradition?" Another student then asked how they all might feel if the song were about "White Wanda" or "Asian Amy." Many students who had moments ago professed that nothing would change their belief that the song should be reinstated nodded their heads, eyebrows raised, clearly considering a perspective they hadn't before. One student noted that he "hadn't thought of it that way." One of the few nonwhite students in the class explained that the song "doesn't bother me, but I guess it just seems like if it is hurting someone and all we have to do is pick a new song to not hurt someone, then we could do that because maybe we don't understand why it's hurting them." This perspective, too, was challenged, as were many others that hadn't been voiced in the first full-class discussion.

I'm not going to tell you that students were able to enter this invitational conversation without the intent-to-persuade. I think it was clear from the earlier discussions that many students were dedicated to their opinions, sure they were right, and sure anyone who disagreed with them was wrong. They wanted to change minds and prove their own views. I don't believe they were capable, particularly after the discussion at the beginning of class, to simply let go of that desire. But, as I noted earlier in the chapter, the intent or lack of intent-to-persuade is less important to invitational rhetoric as a tool for understanding. And I can say that understanding happened as a result of their offering of perspectives. Not for everyone, but for some of the students, and for myself.

Afterwards, I asked students to take a few minutes to freewrite about the experience, discussing in particular how it felt to be part of the large group debate and the invitational discussion. Some students preferred the "debate" because it "was fun" or "strengthened my own argument." Others felt the debate "accomplished something" that the invitational discussion did not. One female student explained that the invitational approach was less effective because "if you are worried about trying not to persuade or offend somebody then you hold back parts of your argument." All valid points. But of seventeen students, eleven professed a strong preference for the invitational format in this particular moment. These students often noted the absence of threat in the invitational format, explaining that they "did not feel threatened" and felt "free to express my ideas." One student believed that "it was clear that we all didn't agree with each other but we understood each other's views" and another wrote that "although we didn't agree, we saw each other's views much more clearly at the end." Finally, a young woman explained that while she was not persuaded by the original large group discussion, she was "moved to

change my thoughts [by the invitational discussion], not because I was forced or yelled at, but because I heard all angles of the story. I did not even consider certain sides of the story until I heard some of the group's ideas and opinions."

I think this moves students beyond the moral relativism that concerns Fulkerson. What I see here is students not simply letting any position stand, but trying to understand multiple and sometimes conflicting positions. They don't accept these positions at face value, but because they are free to accept or reject them, they seem less likely to simply refute all positions that do not immediately support their own. Because they don't feel as though their beliefs are as threatened as they do in a typical debate format, they evidence a willingness to entertain these contrasting beliefs, if only for a moment. And in these moments more students seem comfortable offering their own perspectives than they tend to during larger classroom discussions. During our invitational discussions, students were always given the option to pass, but few did. Students who rarely talked in class, talked in these kinds of conversations, meaning that students and I were able to hear multiple perspectives that we weren't always given access to in other forms of communication.

An invitational pedagogy meant that I, too, had to pay attention to the ways in which I engaged such discussions. Instead of attempting to guide conversations—and students—toward a particular reading (my reading) of a text or issue, I had to let students also guide me, letting go of my assumption that there is a right and wrong way to look at an issue. This has generally been easy for me to do in most cases. It is not, however, easy for me to do when we're talking about issues like race, class, gender, and sexuality—issues where, at least to me, there appears to be a clear right and wrong. This was the case when the "Genocide Awareness Project" came to campus—an organization that equated

abortion with genocide. For me, there is no middle ground here, no valid “other side.” But in order to even *have* this discussion with the more conservative students in my class, I needed to reiterate the invitational framework from which I was attempting to work, explaining that I neither expected nor needed to change their minds on the issue. Instead, I wanted to better understand their stance and hoped that they would better understand mine. This was our framework when we talked about feminism and same-sex marriage, as well. When we hit those moments when tensions ran high, those bumps in the road, students and I tried something different. And sometimes, through this approach, we were better able to hear each other.

I would like to say that my attempts to create and enact an invitational pedagogy were seamless, flawless, always successful. Of course this was not the case. Looking back, I wish I had spent more time imagining ways to utilize this tactic in my comments to student writing. There are moments in my feedback when I ask students, “What would happen if you changed the organization here?” but I have to admit that these are too few and too far between. In the future, I believe that my invitational pedagogy will have to include a more nuanced understanding of written feedback as well. I am curious to see what sort of impact that might have on students and on my teaching, because invitations, if they are true invitations, can be declined.

This issue arose when I tried to construct an assignment using what seemed to me to be invitational language, wondering how that might impact students’ responses to the assignment. Typically, I word discussion board prompts like this: “Describe your current style of argument. Incorporate the terms introduced in your textbook (debate, dialogue,

and deliberation). Which style do you tend to prefer? To use most? Why? Which style(s) do you use in which situations? Try to be as specific as possible.” But this time I wrote:

I invite you to write a 2 page response addressing the similarities and differences between invitational rhetoric and Rogerian rhetoric. First, would you please briefly summarize the basic definitions/ideas of these two rhetorical approaches? Would you please not take more than one page of the response to summarize? The remainder of the response could be a space for you to attempt to make meaning of these rhetorics and to examine the major differences and similarities between them. Given Foss and Griffin’s explanation of feminist rhetorics, you might also consider whether or not Rogerian argument can be considered a feminist rhetorical approach. And would you submit this using the digital dropbox by 9:10 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept 20<sup>th</sup>?

I then asked students to write a post about the differences between a typical prompt and this invitational one, asking:

Did the wording change the way you approached the assignment? Did it change the way that you thought about your writing task? Did it change the way that you thought about your instructor (me) or the class? Did it matter at all that I changed the wording? Why or why not? What is the effect of "inviting" you to write a response as opposed to "requiring" you to do it? Is there a difference for you as a student? Why or why not? Please try to be as specific and thorough as possible in your response.

One student admitted that, looking back, she was more willing to do the assignment that was phrased as an invitation. The second version seemed, to her, more “polite and respectful” so she “didn’t mind doing the assignment as much.” When assignments are phrased in such a way she believes that she is “much more likely to do it, and do it without spite or resentment.”

Many students echoed this response, noting that they preferred the invitational format and were more willing to complete the assignment. Some didn’t notice the change, but a number of students agreed with Lindsey who explained<sup>xxxiv</sup>:

To be perfectly honest, I did not even notice a difference between the two proposed prompts. I believe that we have had the teacher student relationship enstilled in our heads for so long that we, as student, no longer even think to question our teachers. We are the students, in turn we are "supposed" to listen, and obey our elders (professors) without question. So although you as our teacher invited us to join in the discussion board prompt, we knew that it was our obligation as student to complete the task, in order to receive a good grade, ultimately allowing us to become successful within our later lives. I also agree with [another student], my writing style was no different than when I was not invited to participate in the discussion board response, either way I knew I needed to do it, therefore, I found no difference.

And one student simply did not write the response, explaining, “since it was posed as a question, I figured it was optional.”

I believe one of the potential problems with an invitational pedagogy is that the student-teacher relationship is, as one student noted, so instilled in students' (and teachers') heads, that it is difficult to imagine a situation in which one is *not* being evaluated (or evaluator). As I have previously argued, I believe it is possible to minimize the assumption of constant evaluation, but it is probably not possible—perhaps not even desirable—to eradicate it completely. In retrospect, phrasing an assignment as if it were an invitation seems counter-productive. It *is* an assignment and I *do* expect them to complete it. Therefore they cannot refuse this “invitation.” I believe, though, that attempts to practice an invitational pedagogy in moments of conversational tension can in fact be productive, as I hope I have shown. In such moments, students and teachers may find ways in which they can better hear each other in the midst of disagreement and in the face of great differences.

Invitational rhetoric and a pedagogy based in it gave me a tool to hear my students not just as students trying to perform that role, but sometimes as partners in an attempt to better understand an issue or understand the people whose opinions are different than my own. Invitational rhetoric provided us both with another tool to use when we weren't looking for consensus, but for understanding. It expanded—and continues to expand—our discursive options, not just within the walls of the classroom, but as we all step out into the larger civic realm. Perhaps in learning this new language, this new approach, my students and I help create a new history, one in which we may not all get along, but we at least can begin to hear each other.

## CHAPTER 3

### PAUSING TO REFLECT ON RHETORICAL LISTENING AS THEORY AND PEDAGOGY

*"The demographic changes in U.S. schools mean that teaching always involves crossing lines of difference, whether these are generational or based on gender, race, social class, sexuality, ethnicity, or culture. To cross boundaries of difference requires listening, not to erase the boundaries, but to understand and use them as a resource."*

—Katherine Schultz

In the previous chapter I explored invitational rhetoric as a discursive tool designed to help reduce tension in the midst of disagreements, moving interlocutors from a place of defensiveness and attempts at persuasion to a place where participants can try to better understand each other. In short, invitational rhetoric is a strategy to promote better understanding across difference, to promote listening and hearing. Rooted in the principles of equality, immanent value, and self-worth (Foss and Griffin 4), invitational rhetoric is "an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does" (5). Ideally the audience accepts this invitation, listens to the rhetor, and then offers her own perspective to the rhetor (who then becomes the listener) and together they work toward better understanding of the issue and of each other as human beings. The listener may not accept the rhetor's position, and this is of no consequence to the rhetor,



as change and persuasion are not the goal of invitational rhetoric. As I hope I have shown in the previous chapter, invitational rhetoric can be a useful classroom and civic tactic for discussing “hot button” topics such as abortion, race, sexuality, or religion. It can also be a rich foundation for pedagogical practice. It is particularly useful when participants are, or become, too defensive to hear each other.

In their discussion of invitational rhetoric, Foss and Griffin provide strategies for creating safe environments in which invitational rhetoric can take place. These include treating participants with respect, honoring differences, and allowing all viewpoints to be voiced and challenged (Foss and Griffin “Beyond” 6). Foss and Griffin provide further strategies for invitational rhetors, including the offering of perspectives and resourcement (8-9). While both rhetor and audience can create this environment, the onus is on the rhetor to attempt to let go of the need to persuade the listener, and to get the ball rolling, as it were. The listener, on the other hand, has only to accept, to listen. And while this is hardly a passive practice, my exploration of invitational rhetoric has left me wondering about this listener. How, I wonder, does this listening occur? How does one learn to listen in this way? To listen in order to understand? Because if we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that listening is not always as easy as it sounds. Yet, as Krista Ratcliffe explains, “the dominant scholarly trend in rhetoric and composition studies has been to follow the lead of popular culture and naturalize listening, that is, assume it to be something that everyone does but no one needs study” (18). The result, according to Ratcliffe, is that listening “is rarely theorized or taught” (18). There are, of course, exceptions in our field (as Ratcliffe notes), but we offer few courses or textbooks

concerned with the art of listening, a fact that seems to support Ratcliffe's claim. We believe that listening is, for most, a natural act.

The naturalization of listening is often evident in the classroom, as well. As I, the instructor, stand in front of my classroom and lecture (something I find I need to do at times, even in a writing class), I look around the room and wonder who is listening. Some students make eye contact, nod at appropriate times, smile or laugh at my jokes, take notes. These, they know, are markers that they are paying attention, that they are listening. Others have hats pulled down, arms crossed, no eye contact. Not listening, I often assume. But I may be wrong. They may be listening, too. And the others, the seemingly attentive ones, may be "faking it." Or perhaps it's less deliberate. Perhaps they're performing listening, but aren't really present in that performance, just going through the motions. I can't really know just by watching.

My actions as an instructor reify the notion that listening is something easily done, if one so chooses. In those moments when I feel as though I have lost the class, or when small groups are presenting and other groups are still chatting, I remind students to listen to me or to listen to each other. "Hey, we're listening over here, right?" I might ask. In these moments I assume students have simply forgotten what they were to be doing (listening), or have lost their focus. A quick reminder, I assume, urges them to start listening again. No instruction on how to do this, of course. It's listening—they know how to do it. Don't they?

There are real consequences when students stop listening, consequences that reach beyond what is sometimes my own frustration as an instructor. Because often, students imagine themselves to be listening—to texts, to each other, to me—yet really,

they're only hearing a reflection of their own voices, their own already-formed opinions. And students are hardly the only ones in the classroom who struggle with listening. I, too, often find it difficult to hear my students, our texts, even my own discourses. I don't always hear my own assumptions or values. I often don't hear my students. Filling in the gaps of what I believe my students to be saying, or from where I believe their opinions stem, I miss much of what they are trying to tell me. It's a quick hearing, a surface kind of listening. Incomplete.

Of course, definitions and degrees of listening can vary by culture and situation, changing as expectations and positionalities, even students and classrooms, change. In this chapter I will explore and apply one particular kind of listening, Krista Ratcliffe's theory of *rhetorical listening*, as a tactic for better understanding and cross-cultural communication. First I turn to Ratcliffe to help me define the theory and act of rhetorical listening.<sup>xxxv</sup> From there, I will discuss the pedagogical implications that Ratcliffe provides in her text, pointing both to the strengths of her approach as well as the opportunities I see for expanding the applications of her theory in the composition classroom. Finally, I will show how my students and I attempted to listen rhetorically to sources, issues, ourselves, and each other in a primarily sophomore-level persuasive writing course. In so doing, I illustrate my own endeavor to construct a pedagogy of rhetorical listening (as opposed to Ratcliffe's "listening pedagogically"). I hope to show that a pedagogy of rhetorical listening allowed me to better hear moments of power and difference in the classroom, and to better hear my own assumptions and, as Ratcliffe would say, my own "cultural logics" (33). I hope to show, also, how rhetorical listening helped my students do the same. Such a practice, I argue, provides a better (although

always imperfect) hearing for difference between students and texts, students and students, and teachers and students.

### **Defining Rhetorical Listening**

In its most basic terms, Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening as “a trope for interpretive invention and as a code of cross-cultural conduct” (1). As a trope, as a figure through which to see or hear multiple resonances, Ratcliffe hopes that rhetorical listening can provide a means of meaning-making—a means of interpretive invention, particularly across difference. Rhetorical listening may be able to provide such a hearing because it first “signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” (1). Furthermore, rhetorical listening “signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in cross-cultural exchanges” (1). This stance of openness, as well as the moves and tactics that accompany it, may provide ways in which one might “negotiate troubled identifications in order to facilitate cross-cultural communication about any topic” (17). The overarching goal of rhetorical listening is this cross-cultural communication—communication especially across difference. Ratcliffe hopes that rhetorical listening can provide a better hearing for such difference. The question then becomes, how?

Ratcliffe answers this question in a number of ways. First, she offers four moves of rhetorical listening: “promoting an *understanding* of self and other,” “proceeding within an *accountability* logic,” “locating identifications across both *commonalities* and *differences*,” and “analyzing *claims* as well as the *cultural logics* within which those claims function” (26, emphasis in original). She then posits a number of “tactics” that

might help facilitate rhetorical listening, including “listening metonymically,” “eavesdropping,” and “listening pedagogically.” I want to briefly examine these three tactics before circling back to explore in depth the four moves that underlie these tactics.

The first tactic Ratcliffe forwards is “listening metonymically,” which she defines as the “rhetorical-listening moves that listeners may make in public discussions when identifying a text or a person with a cultural group; specifically, this tactic invites listeners to assume that a text or a person is associated with—but not necessarily representative of—an entire cultural group” (78). Ratcliffe believes metonymy is a more useful trope than metaphor because metaphor collapses the differences between two objects. When we speak metaphorically, we speak *as if* one object is representative of another. So, for Ratcliffe, metaphoric thinking can allow one member of a group to appear to be representative of that group. In other words, metaphoric thinking could allow one to presume that one woman speaks for, *represents*, all women. Metonymic thinking, on the other hand, functions via association, not representation. So one woman may be associated with all women, but does not *represent* or stand in for all women. She cannot speak for, or be assumed to speak for, all women simply by her association with them. Listening metonymically, instead of metaphorically, serves to highlight both commonalities and differences, providing a potential hearing for difference.

Eavesdropping, too, is a tactic aimed at hearing difference. Rescuing eavesdropping from its negative busybody connotations, Ratcliffe draws together etymologies of the term to conclude that the act of eavesdropping involves “choosing to stand outside . . . in an uncomfortable spot . . . on the border of knowing and not knowing . . . granting others the inside position . . . learning to learn” (105, ellipses in original).

Eavesdropping then becomes an act of “purposely positioning oneself on the edge of one’s own knowing so as to overhear and learn from others and . . . from oneself” (105). It is the conscious act of listening to our own discourses, as well as to the discourses of others. It is an attempt to hear that which we rarely hear, those things that are perhaps softly spoken or not fully spoken at all.

Finally, Ratcliffe explores the possibility of listening pedagogically, which “signifies the rhetorical-listening moves that students and teachers may make in classroom discourses in order to recognize resistance, analyze it, and, when necessary, resist it” (133). Whereas listening metonymically and eavesdropping are tactics for rhetorical listening to public discussions, history, and identifications, listening pedagogically turns that attention to the space of the classroom. I return to Ratcliffe’s concept of listening pedagogically later in this chapter, but want here to note that listening pedagogically asks that both students and teachers choose a stance of openness in order to better listen for moments of resistance, particularly resistance to difference itself (146).

In all three tactics of rhetorical listening, a number of themes emerge. One of those themes is the tropological nature of language. In her description of all three tactics, Ratcliffe highlights how language, all language, functions as tropes—as “cultural categories that, in turn, inform how we see, order, analyze, and make meaning in the world” (147). Realizing the tropological function of words can lead to a better understanding of how such meanings are culturally coded and therefore subject to shift and change. So acknowledging the tropological nature of language opens a space for

negotiating the multiple meanings and (potentially troubled) identifications signified by tropes like “white,” “woman,” and “gay.”

As tropes can signify differently in different cultural contexts, the tropological nature of language points toward another theme in Ratcliffe’s three tactics: the recognition of difference. A potential code of cross-cultural communication, rhetorical listening and its attendant tactics asks that listeners consciously position themselves in order to better listen for difference. Doing so, hopes Ratcliffe, works toward the overarching goal of rhetorical listening: better cross-cultural communication. In order to better communicate, however, we must first better understand the terms across which we are attempting to communicate. Ratcliffe therefore offers four *moves* of rhetorical listening, moves that provide the foundation for the tactics above. As previously noted, these four moves are as follows:

1. Promoting an *understanding* of self and other
2. Proceeding within an *accountability* logic
3. Locating identifications across *commonalities* and *differences*
4. Analyzing *claims* as well as the *cultural logics* within which these claims function (26, emphasis in original)<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Before I work through each of these moves, I want to emphasize the issue of choice in rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe explains that rhetorical listening is a stance of openness “that a person may choose to assume” in relation to texts, cultures, people, or cross-cultural exchanges (1). As we examine the four moves of rhetorical listening, that issue of choice becomes even clearer. One must first choose, for example, to promote an understanding of self and other. If an interlocutor enters into a conversation hoping only

to strengthen his or her own point, or to “win,” then the goals and tactics of rhetorical listening are already undercut.<sup>xxxvii</sup> This issue of choice carries through the other three moves as well. The listener must choose to proceed within an accountability logic, must choose where to locate identifications, and must choose what and how to analyze.

### **Understanding “Understanding”**

Ratcliffe’s first move is “promoting an understanding of self and other” (26). But what does it mean to promote this sort of understanding? In some ways, this move is relatively self-explanatory. The listener wants to better understand both herself and the other with whom she is engaging (again, we can see similarities between this and invitational rhetoric).<sup>xxxviii</sup> But this attempt at understanding can also be tricky territory, as many may be too quick to declare their understanding. Smoothing over difference in favor of commonality (perceived or real), listeners can believe they have understood another, but may have only heard part of the message. As I noted earlier, the classroom is one place where such forms of partial or mis-understanding often occur. For example, students reading a feminist text often “hear” feminists say that men are the enemy. They believe that they “understand” the feminist position but have really only heard what they already believe, a distorted echo of their own views. We can see evidence of such partial understanding in the feminist movement of the 1970s, in which upper-class white women imagined they “understood” women from other classes, races, and ethnicities based solely on their gender. Such understanding springs, in part, from a partial or unsuccessful attempt at listening for and to difference.<sup>xxxix</sup>



Still, this does not mean that listeners should not strive toward better understanding. In fact, Ratcliffe asks for what she calls a “strategic idealism,” in which listeners can listen with “the intent to understand” (28). In doing so, Ratcliffe recognizes the improbability of what we might call “perfect understanding,” realizing that such understanding is perhaps too idealistic. Still, the *intent* to understand is one of the conditions of rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe puts it this way: “*understanding* means listening to discourses not *for* intent but *with* intent—with the intent to understand not just the claims but the rhetorical negotiations of understanding as well” (28, emphasis in original).

Ratcliffe pushes this further, hoping that those listening rhetorically will attempt to “stand under” discourses, “letting discourses wash over, through, and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics” (28). To stand under discourses (both our own discourses and those of others) is to recognize our shifting standpoints and positionalities and to attempt to understand how these embodied discourses might affect the many texts with which we come into contact (28). Ratcliffe continues by noting that:

Standing under the discourses of others means first, acknowledging the existence of these discourses; second, listening for (un)conscious presences, absences, unknowns; and third, consciously integrating this information into our world views and decision making. (29)

In other words, standing under discourses asks that a listener listen not only for what is said, but from where it is said—the (un)conscious presences, absences, and unknowns. What sources of knowledge might the speaker be drawing from? From what values,

assumptions, and positionalities might a speaker speak? How might these presences, absences, and assumptions differ from the listener's own? And how might those differences impact the listener's attempts at understanding? These are some of the rhetorical negotiations that the rhetorical listener is asked to consider.

Throughout these acts of negotiation, the listener must then recognize the presence and the influence of the other (in this case, the speaker). D. Diane Davis might call this recognizing "the other *as* Other" (138). In other words, the rhetorical listener recognizes the other not as an object, but as a separate subject, one who is a "*necessary* consideration in the making of meaning for the listener" (Ratcliffe 31). In listening rhetorically, then, the listener cannot simply avoid or ignore the presence and influence of the other. Instead, she must let the discourses of others lie before her, imagining how those discourses influence her own (Ratcliffe 28).

So, while we may never truly be able to understand others (or ourselves, for that matter), to enter into an exchange with the *intent* to understand can shift the focus of that exchange from mastery or conquest (as in an antagonistic argument), to understanding and communication. In standing under discourses, the listener does not listen with the intent to find holes, to win, to conquer, but listens to understand the other, both as separate subject (as other) and as source of information that allows the listener to shape his or her own world view.

### **Holding and Being Held Accountable**

Such an attempt at communication through better understanding seems, on the one hand, to be an active process. The listener must choose to enter into the exchange

hoping to promote understanding, for example. Yet the idea of “standing under” discourses, letting discourses “wash over you,” smacks of a form of passivity that might make some readers uncomfortable. Because this standing under may call up cultural stereotypes of femininized passivity, the positioning of women as receptacles to be filled, or as quiet receptors, some may find Ratcliffe’s idea problematic. Furthermore, the idea of standing under discourses as they wash over you seems to imply an inability to react or critique. If discourses simply wash over a listener, then what agency does the listener have to engage such discourses, particularly if they seem threatening or prejudiced?

Ratcliffe’s second move speaks to this potential critique, noting that rhetorical listeners must choose to function from within an “accountability logic” (26). Ratcliffe chooses the term “accountability” instead of “responsibility” because she believes responsibility still implies a form of guilt and blame (note 10, pg 191). Accountability, on the other hand, reminds us that we are beholden to each other, as members of the same larger community. It reminds us that our actions affect others, and that we are affected by others’ actions. It also reminds us that “all of us are, at present, culturally implicated in effects of the past (via our resulting privileges and/or their lack) and, thus, accountable for what we do about situations now, even if we are not responsible for their origins” (32). Ratcliffe calls this “the-past-that-is-always-present” (98). In an accountability logic, I cannot claim to have nothing to do with racism because I am not racist, or because my family did not own slaves. Within an accountability logic, I must instead attempt to recognize how my own privileges as a white woman in this society are implicated in unequal power structures. But instead of wallowing in self/white guilt, an accountability

logic asks us also to be accountable to those around us, moving us from the stagnating loop of guilt/blame/defensiveness into a space of agency and action.

Working from within an accountability logic also means that we can hold others accountable for their views and actions. Similarly, we must hold ourselves accountable for our views and actions (as can others). This second move of rhetorical listening helps shuttle us away from a purely relativistic framework where all viewpoints are imagined to be equally valid. It also allows for action within the “standing under” context. Here, listeners may let discourses wash over them, but they do so in order to begin to understand these discourses, and to see what sorts of knowledge might come from laying different discourses next to each other. But this is only a first step. In an attempt to listen to such discourses, we must also pay attention to the power dynamics inherent in discourse. An accountability logic asks that we think about the effects of our discourses and actions, the ways in which we benefit from or are harmed by systemic power structures (including racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and capitalism), and how we might intervene in such structures. An accountability logic, according to Ratcliffe, “offers listeners a place to hear (some of) our conscious identifications, articulate these identifications, and even talk back to them” (32). So an accountability logic, while hopefully moving us outside of a place of guilt and blame—neither of which tend to spark action—asks that we imagine with whom we identify, how those identifications mark and fail to mark us within current social power structures, and what we can do to acknowledge or disrupt such structures.

### **Identification, Disidentification, and Non-identification**

One of ways in which we can pay more attention to how we are accountable within larger social systems is to try to make more conscious choices about identification and disidentification. Because “troubled identifications” can hinder communication, Ratcliffe asks that listeners become more aware of their identificatory practices, “cultivat[ing] conscious identifications in ways that promote productive communication” (25). To do so, the third move of rhetorical listening asks that listeners “locat[e] identifications across *commonalities* and *differences*” (26, emphasis in original).

It is perhaps impossible to utter the term “identification” without invoking Kenneth Burke. For Burke (and many others), identification primarily occurs on the basis of similarities, of common ground. Burke has famously said “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his” (55, emphasis in original). Burke links “identification” with what he terms “consubstantiality,” a process by which two different entities, while remaining separate entities, can become one like the other. In Burke’s rhetoric, identification happens along similar lines. It is a way of coming together, of becoming linked through similarity. One does this through “talking the language” of the other, of the audience or listener. The rhetor then attempts to identify with the audience, or more specifically, to persuade the audience to identify with the rhetor, by highlighting the similarities between rhetor and audience. One of the more famous attempts at such identification can be seen in John F. Kennedy’s declaration that he, too, was a citizen of Berlin.<sup>x1</sup>

A theory of rhetorical listening does not dismiss identification through consubstantiation, but instead supplements such theories by offering a form of identification across both commonalities *and* differences. Of course we identify with others based on what we have in common. We bond over shared experiences, similar histories, and similar stories. As Katherine Schultz observes, “[w]e often want to bridge social distance by assuming a common humanity that unites rather than divides us” (12). But to limit identification to consubstantiation can (does not have to, but can) ignore, silence, or erase differences in favor of similarity. In other words, if we only listen for similarities, we might not hear—or might actively silence—differences. What Ratcliffe hopes for, and what rhetorical listening strives for, is a more conscious act of identification across both similarities and difference so that subjects may engage in more productive cross-cultural exchanges.

To this end, Ratcliffe proposes non-identification as a supplement—another step, really—in the process of identification, intervening between what currently exists as the two options for identificatory practices: identification and disidentification. If identification is typically forged across similarity (or is at least imagined to be forged in such a way), disidentification would seem to be a simple matter of declaring one’s self “not-that.” But as Diana Fuss argues, disidentification is an identification that is “disavowed,” not necessarily refused (qtd in Ratcliffe 62). In this way, to disidentify with a person or group means one must first *identify* with that person or group inasmuch as one must construct some sort of image of that person or group. Once such an identification has happened, then the identifying subject can choose to distance him or herself from the individual or group. Like Ratcliffe’s notion of rhetorical listening,

disidentification functions through both similarities and differences. Unlike rhetorical listening, disidentification privileges difference. Furthermore, disidentification does not posit better cross-cultural communication as one of its goals.

This is not to say that Ratcliffe wants to dismiss disidentification. Instead, she posits non-identification as a way to make more conscious decisions about identificatory practices. Ratcliffe worries that “easy identifications may mask power differentials and coerced differences” (72). In other words, when we are too quick to identify, we may not listen for what it is that we’re leaving out of that identification—the silences, gaps, and power dynamics. We may, instead, listen only for similarities, and even these we may not closely examine. Too-quick disidentification, it seems, can serve the same purpose. If we identify with others based solely on similarities, then a knee-jerk disidentification does not encourage the listener to listen with the intent to understand the other. A quick disidentification based on lack of similarities may shut down cross-cultural communication.

To assuage this problem, Ratcliffe asks that rhetorical listeners practice non-identification as a way to make more conscious decisions about identificatory practices. In non-identification, the rhetorical listener resists, momentarily, both identification and disidentification in order to better listen for commonalities and differences, as well as the power dynamics that might be functioning in the exchange. I turn again to Ratcliffe for a clearer definition of non-identificatory processes, where non-identification is:

a stance that recognizes interdependency among subjects. Within an interdependent place of non-identification, X and Y are imagined not as subject and object but as two very different subjects—that is, as subjects

who are juxtaposed but not necessarily on common ground, as subjects who are encountering the same socializing discourses but processing them very differently, as subjects whose juxtaposition presupposes an interdependency upon one another that is integral to identity formation of each. (73)

Ratcliffe imagines the hyphen in non-identification to represent a space between, a borderland, a “place of pause, a place of reflection, a place that invites people to admit that gaps exist” (72-3). It is a place where subjects can “*choose* to position themselves to listen rhetorically” (72).

The issue of choice, as we have seen earlier, is crucial in rhetorical listening. In this place of pause, listeners make conscious decisions about with whom to identify or disidentify. They can consciously choose to listen for both similarities and differences, for gaps and silences, and for differing power dynamics. This conscious decision to pause might help minimize the glossing over and silencing of difference that can accompany immediate identification or disidentification. In doing so, non-identification might allow listeners to “recognize the partiality of our visions” (73). Such a recognition provides for the possibility of “consciously asserting our agency to engage cross-cultural rhetorical exchanges across both commonalities *and* differences” (73, emphasis in original).

One caveat about the conscious choice that is inherent in non-identification: As in all discursive processes, we must always be on the lookout for unequal power dynamics. In this case, we would do well to keep in mind that those in nondominant cultures have often found it necessary to listen to those in dominant cultures. This listening became a matter of survival. Those from dominant cultures, however, “possess the unearned



*privilege to choose* to learn about nondominant home cultures” (Ratcliffe 63, emphasis in original). Members of dominant cultures, then, must be particularly aware of their own positionalities, as well as the positionalities of those around them, and avoid the temptation to appropriate or mask differences in the name of identification. Again, non-identification provides a space, a place of pause, in which to reflect on these power dynamics, but we must also remember that the *choice* to listen is itself sometimes a mark of unequal access to power.

### **Cultural Logics**

The fourth move of rhetorical listening provides a (more) concrete method for identifying across both commonalities and differences. Listening rhetorically asks that listeners analyze both claims and the *cultural logics* that allow those claims to function. This analysis of cultural logics is a cornerstone of rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe defines a cultural logic like this, “If a claim is an assertion of a person’s thinking, then a cultural logic is a belief system or shared way of reasoning within which a claim may function” (33). So, while not every libertarian may share the same views, we can imagine a libertarian cultural logic, or a general belief system or way of reasoning that is common to many libertarians.

Cultural logics share many similarities with *warrants* in the Toulmin system of argumentation. For Toulmin, warrants are the connecting link between claims and support; they also serve as a connecting link between claims and the audience. They can function as enthymemes function, where the audience “fills in” the assumed warrant. Or they can be more clearly and directly stated by the rhetor. A warrant, though, is typically

a discrete statement or assumption, whereas a cultural logic is an entire belief system that allows a claim to function. Still, the two can often function in similar (or even identical) ways in some discourses.

The difference is more in the goal of such analysis than in the function of warrants and cultural logics. In a Toulmin analysis a reader determines whether or not the warrant(s) supports the claim. In analyzing cultural logics, the listener does not simply evaluate whether or not he or she finds the argument convincing. Instead, the listener works to better understand why the speaker believes what he or she believes. The listener works to understand the values and systems of beliefs that allow the claim to function. In doing so, the listener does not need to necessarily agree with the speaker. When the listener does not agree, she can still “better appreciate that the other person is not simply wrong but rather functioning from within a different cultural logic” (Ratcliffe 33). In practicing this move of rhetorical listening, one may begin to better hear the dissonances and power relationships between different positionalities and identifications. This is not to say that rhetorical listening can or will create an ideal world in which unequal power relations no longer exist. It is, however, to say that such listening attempts to foster respect for the other and work toward better cross-cultural communication.

### **Rhetorical Listening: Contributions and Questions**

I find Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening incredibly useful, both in the classroom and in the larger civic realm. Negotiating troubled identifications, making more conscious decisions about identifications and disidentifications, communicating across cultures, identifying across both similarities and differences—these all seem like

worthy goals. They ask that listeners consider difference, not always as something to be overlooked or overcome, but also as a necessary component in meaning-making. Rhetorical listening works toward better understanding and communication, particularly in moments of discord or difference.

Ratcliffe's theory of rhetorical listening, particularly her positing of a place of non-identification, also serves to challenge and supplement more traditional theories of persuasion and rhetoric by shifting the focus from the rhetor to the listener. Of course traditional theories of persuasion must consider the listener in order to effectively persuade. In a Burkean sense, you must know the other's language in order to speak it. So you must acquaint yourself with the other in order to persuade him or her. This is the basis of market research: know your audience.

But what of that audience? What role does the listener play in his or her own persuasion? Again, if Burke is right, in order to be persuaded a listener must first be convinced of the commonalities between herself and the rhetor. The rhetor, in such an equation, is positioned as the actor and the listener as the one acted upon. The listener is the one who must be moved—a metaphor that echoes of the physical force often required for the movement of an object. And in this process the listener can seem much like an object, as a thing to be acted upon. While the listener must be known in order to be changed (persuaded), the rhetor is the primary agent of this change.

Of course the listener has always participated in his or her own persuasion in some form, or at least had the capacity to do so. The recognition of that participation by rhetors and rhetorical theories has ebbed and waned over the centuries, but certainly listeners have always been able to hasten or resist their own persuasion. Even so, the

listener has generally been imagined as the one *reacting* to the rhetor's action, to the rhetor's attempts at persuasion, agreeing or disagreeing, being moved or resisting that movement. But it is the rhetor who pushes, and the listener the one who is moved. Rhetorical listening, on the other hand, draws particular attention to the agency of the listener, shining a light on the ways in which listeners consciously move themselves toward—or away from—the rhetor. Listening becomes, or is recognized as, an active process.

Finally, it should be noted that persuasion is not the primary goal of rhetorical listening. Understanding, communication, identification—these are the goals. One might argue that all communication has inherent in it some form of persuasion, but the *primary* goal of listening rhetorically is not persuasion. In fact, “rhetorical listening does not simply assume that identifications will precede persuasion; rather, it offers one tactic for attempting to negotiate troubled identifications that haunt many rhetorical exchanges” (Ratcliffe 27). Identification, in this framework, precedes better cross-cultural communication.

The goals of rhetorical listening and the supplement to traditional theories of rhetoric and persuasion are all productive aspects of Ratcliffe's work. Yet I find myself struggling with aspects of this text, of this theory. One of these struggles is separating the means of rhetorical listening from the ends. Ratcliffe defines the goals of rhetorical listening as more conscious negotiation of (troubled) identifications “in order to facilitate cross-cultural communication about any topic” (17). The four primary moves, as described above, that allow a listener to work toward these ends are again:

1. Promoting an *understanding* of self and other

2. Proceeding within an *accountability* logic
3. Locating identifications across *commonalities* and *differences*
4. Analyzing *claims* as well as the *cultural logics* within which these claims function (26, emphasis in original)

Moves two, three, and four appear to be steps that one could take in order to practice rhetorical listening. By performing these acts, one may then become a better rhetorical listener. But what of the first move, “promoting an understanding of self and other?” While one might be able to choose to promote such an understanding, and in making such a choice the listener may be taking action toward listening rhetorically, to simply ask listeners to promote such an understanding seems to ask that they enact one of the underlying *goals* of rhetorical listening, instead of one of the *actions*.

Within the larger scope of promoting an understanding, Ratcliffe offers “standing under” discourses as one strategy for such understanding. Another, it appears, is to listen with intent. These might be considered some of the *moves* of rhetorical listening. But the promotion of understanding itself, that seems like one of the *goals*. In fact, on a number of occasions Ratcliffe herself calls this first move one “end of rhetorical listening” (27). Ratcliffe explains that “by posing understanding as an end of rhetorical listening, I am not proposing that we idealize understanding or authorial intent” (27). In chapter 5, “Listening Pedagogically,” Ratcliffe also notes that rhetorical listening provides “possibilities for greater understanding” (171). In her own language, then, Ratcliffe slips between means and ends, where the act of rhetorical listening itself helps to promote an understanding of self and other.

Ratcliffe contributes further to this confusion in her discussion of moves three and four. While more clearly practices—actions one could take in order to listen rhetorically—these steps seem to slide into each other, working both as means and ends. For example, Ratcliffe believes that the focus on commonalities and differences inherent in rhetorical listening as reflected primarily in move three means “rhetorical listening ties the personal (a person’s claim) to the political (a cultural logic) without totally collapsing differences between the two” (33). If I understand this correctly, the third move of rhetorical listening (locating identifications across commonalities and differences) both allows for the fourth move (analyzing both claims and cultural logics) and is operationalized *by the practice of* this fourth move. One way, in other words, to work toward identifications across both commonalities and differences is to analyze cultural logics. In this way the third move (identifying across commonalities and differences) becomes one of the goals of the fourth move (analyzing claims and cultural logics). This, again, seems to collapse the means and the ends of rhetorical listening.

Why is this important? Because confusing goals with moves can cause a sort of feedback loop of circular reasoning where, as instructors, we ask our students (and ourselves) to practice rhetorical listening in order to practice rhetorical listening. In other words, we ask them to practice promoting understanding (one of the moves) in order to promote understanding (one of the ends). This confusion could serve to minimize the importance of Ratcliffe’s contribution to rhetoric and composition in at least two ways. First, when caught in this circular reasoning, the larger goals of rhetorical listening could be lost. Instead of focusing on better cross-cultural communication and negotiating difference, the moves themselves become the goal. This is not to say that promoting an

understanding of self and other is not a worthy goal, only that Ratcliffe imagined this as one way to work toward better cross-cultural communication. But when moves become confused with ends, it is harder to see beyond the moves themselves, harder to see communication as the end goal.

Such confusion can also diminish Ratcliffe's contribution to composition and rhetoric because it makes murky the ways in which one might actually put this theory into practice. In a classroom setting, such confusion could also diminish students' understanding of both the goals and moves of rhetorical listening, as well as the importance of such a practice. For instructors, a clear means of operationalizing Ratcliffe's theory makes utilizing it in the classroom much more manageable and therefore more likely.

Perhaps anticipating some confusion over the actual practice of listening rhetorically in the classroom, Ratcliffe includes an entire chapter on the connection between her theory and her teaching practices. She is the only theorist from this project to make such a concerted effort to do so. It may seem as though Ratcliffe has then done my work for me—constructed a pedagogical practice out of this particular feminist rhetorical theory. But as I will show, her focus on the classroom setting, while interesting and useful, could benefit from a more sustained focus on specific practices of teaching.

### **Listening Pedagogically: A Pedagogy of Rhetorical Listening?**

The final chapter of Ratcliffe's text is devoted solely to classroom practice. Ratcliffe even provides an appendix of teaching materials to help instructors incorporate rhetorical listening into their classrooms. In this section, I engage Ratcliffe's discussion

of what she calls “listening pedagogically,” pointing to what I see as the contributions of this pedagogical turn, as well as some of the drawbacks. Ultimately, while I find Ratcliffe’s discussion of pedagogy useful, I also believe there is room to expand this facet of the conversation. I therefore turn to my own attempts to construct a pedagogy of rhetorical listening (which I will differentiate from Ratcliffe’s attempts to listen pedagogically), as well as my students’ attempts to practice rhetorical listening in both oral and written communication. I hope my explication of a pedagogy of rhetorical listening serves to expand on Ratcliffe’s groundbreaking work, encouraging its growth in our field.

For Ratcliffe, “[l]istening pedagogically signifies the rhetorical-listening moves that students and teachers may make in classroom discourses in order to recognize resistance, analyze it, and, when necessary resist it” (133). Ratcliffe notes the complicated nature of the term “resistance,” explaining that in Freudian terms, resistance is coded as the refusal to recognize or comply, whereas in a Marxian framework, resistance is a site of agency. Ratcliffe hopes that teachers and students can counter (post)Freudian resistance by utilizing a (post)Marxian resistance to dominant frameworks of oppression, inequality, and silence. Ratcliffe lists eight kinds of common classroom resistance: denial, dismissal, indifferent compliance, defensiveness, overidentification, nonproductive guilt, adherence to gender- and/or color-blindness, and speaking or writing block (138-9). All of these forms of unproductive resistance can impede learning and communication by allowing both students and teacher to avoid engagement with difference.



In order to resist such resistance, Ratcliffe then offers six moves that allow teachers to “set the scene” for pedagogical listening. She encourages teachers to “*reflect on the term pedagogy and its power dynamics,*” “*articulate one’s own pedagogical assumptions,*” “*identify teacher goals and student learning outcomes,*” “*construct a course calendar that enables students to learn the outcomes and complete the assignment,*” “*design assignments to help students achieve these learning outcomes,*” and “*decide upon a teaching ethos*” (141-45, emphases in original). As I would argue that these six moves are not specific to listening pedagogically, but are important and valuable pedagogical practices regardless of one’s approach to teaching, I include them only to illustrate Ratcliffe’s recognition of the ways in which theory is translated into practice through the hard work of the practitioner. The work of one who is specifically attempting to listen pedagogically seems rooted more specifically in the ten moves that Ratcliffe lists next:

1. “*Study how language functions via tropes,*”
2. “*Define how gender and race (including whiteness) function as tropes,*”
3. “*Reflect on how local conditions inform our definitions of gender and whiteness,*”
4. “*Investigate how gender and whiteness continuously intersect with each other as well as with other cultural categories, such as class, age, region, nationality, and so forth,*”
5. “*Expose the perceived ‘universality’ of tropes, such as gender and whiteness, by culturally grounding them,*”

6. *“Expose the perceived ‘naturalness’ of tropes, such as gender and whiteness by historicizing them,”*
7. *“Distinguish between physical bodies and rhetorical tropes, such as gender and whiteness,”*
8. *“Acknowledge the embodiment of tropes,”*
9. *“Develop and share pedagogical theory, research, and tactics for linking a gendered and raced rhetoric to writing instruction,”*
10. *“Keep listening for cultural privilege and its lack within an accountability logic as a way to critique the power differentials of sexism, racism, and their intersections.”* (147-157, emphasis in original)

I would like to point to a number of themes I see in these ten moves. First, there is the theme of gender and whiteness. This recurrent focus is due to in part to Ratcliffe’s own positionality as a feminist, as well as to the “inquiry theme” of whiteness assigned to students in Ratcliffe’s advanced writing class, from which many of the materials of her chapter are gleaned.<sup>xli</sup> The tropes of gender and whiteness are not exactly arbitrary, as they point to two powerful tropes in U.S. culture, but they are also not the only inquiry themes that students and Ratcliffe explore, nor are they the only topics one might use to listen pedagogically.

For me, a more striking theme is that of tropes themselves. Six of the ten moves reference tropes directly and tropes are referenced more indirectly in two more moves (numbers three and four). Of course, as all language is tropological, every move Ratcliffe identifies that deals with language use and power could be said to be focused on identifying and exploring tropes. Still, enacting pedagogical listening seems for Ratcliffe

to be closely tied to an examination of such tropes. When four-fifths of the moves Ratcliffe lists pertain to tropes, it is hard to argue otherwise.

This is not to say that Ratcliffe's focus on the tropological function of language is itself problematic. Helping students to see how multiple cultural meanings are mapped onto words is one way—an often very effective way—to address issues of language and power. Ratcliffe believes that “[u]nderstanding the function of tropes (not simply as a matter of style but as the very ‘nature’ of language itself) helps students understand how competing discourses can lie before us, reverberating with the potential to be negotiated and renegotiated via rhetorical listening” (148-9). In other words, a study of the tropological nature of language can illustrate for students (and teachers) that language and meaning are not static, but culturally constructed. Because the construction of meaning is implicated in social power dynamics and because that meaning *is* a construction, then language itself can become a site of (post)Marxian resistance.

The focus on tropes seems well suited to a composition classroom where students continually wrestle with issues of language and power—both their own language practices and those of the texts they read, view, or listen to. Yet moves two through eight of Ratcliffe's schema seem to be subsets of move one, providing ways for instructors and students to expose the tropological function of language, particularly terms such as gender and whiteness. Not so much separate acts of the larger notion of listening pedagogically, moves two through eight seem acts meant to help students “study how language functions via tropes.” Language functions in this way in part because language is culturally situated (move 5), historical (6), local (3), and embodied (7, 8) yet is often imagined to be universal (5) and natural (6).

But by focusing so strongly on revealing to students the tropological function of language, Ratcliffe leaves behind much of her earlier discussion of rhetorical listening practices, leading me to wonder about the connection between rhetorical listening and pedagogical listening. While tropes are a major factor in rhetorical listening (especially as Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening itself as a trope), her focus on them in this chapter eclipses the four moves of rhetorical listening as explained by Ratcliffe. Where, for example, is the focus on identification, cultural logics, and accountability? Clearly Ratcliffe hasn't abandoned these terms or acts completely, as we can see from move ten in which she directly references an accountability logic. She also notes that "tropes signify differently within different cultural logics," thereby linking the underlying moves of rhetorical listening with listening pedagogically (149). And tropes figure large in her discussion of rhetorical listening and in her chapter on eavesdropping. Still, because of the heavy emphasis on tropes and the minimization of other aspects of rhetorical listening, listening pedagogically can seem like something of a disconnect from the larger discussion of rhetorical listening.

What is lacking for me in Ratcliffe's chapter on listening pedagogically is a pedagogy of rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe provides moves (primarily the identification and exploration of tropes) to help instructors address resistance to issues such as race and gender, and she models her own acts of listening rhetorically to student texts, showing what she learns from listening pedagogically to students, but she does not provide guidelines for a larger pedagogical practice, nor does she spend much time exploring what her *students* learned by practicing the act of rhetorical listening. In other words, there seems to be a difference between "listening pedagogically" and what I am calling a

“pedagogy of rhetorical listening.” How might instructors enact rhetorical listening in the classroom? How might students learn to practice rhetorical listening in both their verbal and written communication? How might students and instructors work toward more conscious identifications, across both commonalities and differences? How might they work toward more effective cross-cultural communication, and better recognition and understanding of difference? A discussion of the tropological nature of language might be one way in which instructors and students begin to address issues of race, gender, language, and power in the classroom, but given the rich possibilities of rhetorical listening, there are so many aspects that this focus leaves unexplored.

This is not to say that I expected Ratcliffe to do my work for me, handing me a fully formed pedagogical practice that I could import wholesale into my classroom. All pedagogies are local, and must be constantly adjusted to suit the needs of the instructor, the students, the institution, the materials, even, sometimes, the weather. Still, instructors work from over-arching pedagogical goals—feminist, Marxist, expressivist—and modify as necessary. As I hope I have shown in the previous chapter, no pedagogical approach is appropriate for all occasions. But a pedagogy based in rhetorical listening might help instructors address some of my questions from the previous paragraph. To that end, I attempted to develop a pedagogy of rhetorical listening based in Ratcliffe’s theory. In doing so I do not mean to dismiss the valuable work Ratcliffe has done with listening pedagogically. Her final chapter made clearer the tropological nature of language as well as how students often work from conflicting cultural logics when talking about race and gender. Instead, I hope that my discussion of a pedagogy of rhetorical listening builds on

and from Ratcliffe's theory, extending it more fully into the realm of the college composition classroom.

### **A Pedagogy of Rhetorical Listening**

A pedagogy driven by rhetorical listening originates in definitions of rhetorical listening—especially as a stance of openness that one can choose to assume in relation to any text—as well as goals of rhetorical listening, including more conscious identifications across commonalities and differences, more effective cross-cultural communication, and an attempt at understanding. Such a practice asks that instructors and students listen for the interplay of power and language in all texts, especially when one encounters resistance or difference.<sup>xiii</sup> A pedagogy of rhetorical listening works toward a recognition, not a silencing or glossing over, of difference by listening *for* difference. It also works toward better understanding and communication across difference by attempting to move beyond not only a guilt/blame logic, but also a mastery/persuasion logic, keeping in mind that listening rhetorically to discourses has “the potential to transpose a desire for mastery into a self-conscious desire for receptivity” (Ratcliffe 29).

In enacting a pedagogy of rhetorical listening, students and instructors try to listen to the texts they encounter, to each other, and to themselves. The stance of openness called for by Ratcliffe and therefore by this approach means that both instructors and students must be willing to be held accountable for their beliefs and actions, as well as for the ways in which they benefit from current power structures. It also means that students and instructors (and sometimes this is harder, I think, for instructors) must be open to changing or at least reconsidering their views in light of this new hearing.

One way in which an instructor can enact these goals is to incorporate rhetorical listening into the course as content, asking students to read about rhetorical listening, and then constructing assignments that ask students to practice rhetorical listening. Additionally, within a pedagogy of rhetorical listening, both instructors and students should

- choose a stance of openness in relation to texts
- recognize that texts are not limited to the discourses of others, but include our own discourses as well
- listen not only for what is said or expressed, but for what is *not* said or expressed, for gaps and silences
- listen for both claims and the (often unspoken) cultural logics that allow such claims to function
- pause to reflect on moments of identification or disidentification
- pause to reflect on how intersections of power and language might contribute to or hinder cross-cultural communication

These six points reflect a number of goals and strategies of rhetorical listening, but also demonstrate tenets of feminist pedagogy more generally. For one, it draws attention to issues of language and power. It also asks that students and instructors listen for the resonances of difference in areas like gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and able-bodiedness. Furthermore, a pedagogy of rhetorical listening can help to (at least momentarily) disrupt the mastery that often accompanies an attempt at persuasion or control-over in the classroom by promoting better understanding and communication, rather than more effective control-over.

This is not to say that persuasion should not be part of a curriculum in which such a pedagogy is enacted. It is to say, however, that in *some* moments, students and instructors might need to work instead toward understanding. As is often the case with identificatory practices, many of us (myself included) are too-quick to leap to defending our views or attempting to persuade another. A pedagogy of rhetorical listening asks that both students and instructors pause to listen and attempt to understand in an effort to promote cross-cultural communication. Because rhetorical listening proceeds from an accountability logic, however, it provides a space of agency, allowing for the possibility of action in order to address inequality. Ratcliffe explains that listening rhetorically presumes an “ethical responsibility to argue for what we deem fair and just while questioning that which we deem fair and just” (25). Rhetorical listening, and its practices in the classroom, may function then as either a first step toward more traditional action (such as persuasion), or as a tool for better communication, especially across difference. Such actions may be more ethical, however, if one first works toward more complete understanding of the issue and the people involved.

I would like now to turn to my own specific classroom context, a primarily sophomore-level persuasive writing course that I taught at the University of New Hampshire. I taught three sections of this course, one section each semester for three consecutive terms. As part of our study of persuasion, students in this class were asked to read Ratcliffe’s 1999 *CCC* article “Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a ‘Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct.’” Students and I discussed Ratcliffe’s shift from a “responsibility” logic to an “accountability logic,” and paid particular attention to the four major moves of rhetorical listening. Finally, we discussed the



concepts of identification, disidentification, and non-identification. Once they were more familiar with some of the language (cultural logics, accountability, identification), we attempted to listen rhetorically to a number of texts, including the syllabus.

One of the first assignments in my persuasive writing class involves the course syllabus. Students are asked to read the syllabus and find a policy with which they disagree. They then construct an argument, attempting to persuade me, the instructor, to change that policy. Students are often hesitant about this assignment at first, but once they understand that I am willing to change many of the policies if they make a persuasive argument, they get a little more motivated. The attempt to persuade the instructor to change the syllabus provides a useful introduction to audience, purpose, and evidence, and ensures that (most) students read the syllabus thoroughly. Students and I then enter into a written dialogue, responding to each others' concerns in margin comments and formal letters. If students make cases that seem persuasive to me, I change the syllabus to reflect that policy.<sup>xliii</sup>

Later, we return to this assignment, and students and I attempt to listen rhetorically to the claims that we have both made, as well as the underlying values and belief systems that allow those claims to function. Students, for example, listen to their own claims that they should be allowed three absences without penalty *in addition to* absences due to illness that should be, in their terms, "excused." We talk about the values and assumptions that underlie such claims as well as the values and assumptions that underlie an absence policy. We also discuss my possible assumptions about education, college students, and their priorities. And we talk about what students are assuming or not assuming about these topics and about me.

This relatively brief introduction to the practice of listening rhetorically, especially analyzing the claims and the cultural logics that allow those claims to function, help orient all of us—students and instructor—to the shift in goals that rhetorical listening engenders. Students and I are no longer trying to persuade each other to change (or not change) the syllabus. Instead, we're attempting to understand the cultural assumptions inherent in our differing positionalities as students and instructors, positionalities that reflect a marked imbalance of power.

I include this brief example simply to provide a sense of the smaller ways in which I introduce rhetorical listening in the classroom. For the sake of time and space, I would like to turn to two larger moments where rhetorical listening has played a role in my persuasive writing classrooms. The first is an assignment I constructed to encourage students to practice rhetorical listening. At first glance, it may seem as though rhetorical listening is best suited for oral / aural exchanges. It is, after all, an act of hearing. Yet the process of listening rhetorically is relatively complex and, while it clearly lends itself to aural listening (as I hope to show in a moment), listening rhetorically is also a useful tool for both reading and writing, particularly in terms of analysis.

I will next turn to a discussion that erupted one semester surrounding same-sex marriage and sexuality. During this discussion, students and I attempted to practice rhetorical listening in order to better negotiate troubled identifications. Within this context, I believe a pedagogy of rhetorical listening prepared me to listen for issues of language, power, and resistance in this discussion.

But first, the campus issue project—a major writing assignment designed to help students analyze claims and cultural logics, to listen for difference and attempt to

understand it, to remain open to the texts with which they were engaging, and to hold themselves and others accountable for their views. In short, a writing assignment that asks students to listen rhetorically.

### **The Campus Issue Project**

The issue analysis has taken two forms in my persuasive writing classes: a more traditional issue analysis and a campus issue project. For the purposes of this chapter I'd like to focus on the campus issue project, the second major assignment in my persuasive writing class.<sup>xliv</sup> It's an ambitious project, to be sure. Students find a topic on campus around which there is some sort of discussion or debate. They work with it for a number of weeks, so I encourage them to find a topic about which they are passionate (or at least interested). Students can choose an issue from their home communities, if they are able to research it easily, but most students (all but one in three semesters) have chosen campus issues, ranging from parking, housing, and the out-sourcing of housekeeping and maintenance staff, to smoking on campus, and the lack of women's ice skates at the recreation center.

Throughout the course of the project, students tackle a number of different writing assignments. The first is an initial proposal to me, explaining the issue they have chosen, why they have chosen that issue, what they already know or assume about the issue, and the information they'll need to gather. Next, students write an issue report, explaining the conversation surrounding the issue in as much relevant detail as they can, taking care not to state a position or offer a solution. Students then write a brief paragraph identifying the appropriate audience and explaining why this is the appropriate audience given their issue

and purpose. The in-depth analysis of the issue follows. In this portion of the project, students analyze as many sides as are relevant using the analysis of cultural logics as their primary tool. Students then write a deliberation document, synthesizing what they have learned about the issue and the proposed solutions to the issue. They also recommend their own solution or support one that has already been proposed. Finally, students write a proposal to the appropriate audience, voicing their support for a particular solution to their issue. This often takes the form of a business letter, but some students have written letters to the student newspaper or designed flyers for their dorm. Students must choose the appropriate form given their audience and purpose. This final document is submitted to me, but is also sent to the appropriate audience if the writer so chooses. Many students do, in fact, choose to send their proposals or letters to committee members or the student newspaper, although some do not. Students are not required to send their final proposals (although they do not know that until they have submitted them to me), and their grades are not affected by their decision.<sup>xiv</sup>

This project has two major goals. The first is more traditional: students work toward a persuasive proposal that they send to the appropriate audience. In this way, students can begin to “go public,” with their writing and see the effects of their language on their communities, in this case, their campus. But the analysis section of this assignment is also meant to help students practice rhetorical listening. Students do move, then, to a more traditional attempt at persuasion, but often find that their positions have changed due in part to the stance of openness I ask them to assume, as well as to their attempts to listen rhetorically to the stakeholders in the conversation that they engage. And while this is not a comparative study—I did not look at analytical essays in which

students did not use rhetorical listening and compare them to essays in which students did use rhetorical listening—I did pay attention to the differences in students' drafts. In earlier drafts many students struggled with the concept of cultural logics, and tended to describe the different sides of an issue without delving into the more complicated task of analysis. After conferencing with students and providing written feedback on drafts, particularly concerning the concept of analyzing cultural logics (and after a review session in class), revisions tended to reflect a more detailed analysis of the issue, specifically surrounding the cultural logics at play. In other words, in later drafts many students attempted to listen rhetorically.

I offer here an example of a student, Lori, attempting to listen rhetorically. As a student concerned about health and fitness, Lori chose the size of the campus recreation center as her campus issue, believing that the gym at the Hamel Recreation Center is simply too small to accommodate the student population. Before even beginning her research, Lori believed that the gym needed to be replaced by a larger facility. I cautioned her to try to withhold, or at least temper, her opinions until after she did the research, reminding her (and her classmates) that listening rhetorically asks that we begin from a stance of openness about any text, including our own viewpoints. In order to better hear the texts with which students would engage, I reminded them often that they would have to remain open, not only to change, but to hearing other positions on this issue, not just in order to bolster their own opinions, but in order to truly understand where others' opinions were coming from.

Of course this is an incredibly difficult thing to ask of anyone. Lori had been to the gym enough to know that she often waited in lines for equipment. So had her friends.

To be honest, so had I. But this was also Lori's only experience with a campus gym, having not gone to another university before UNH. Her opinion was based solely in personal experience, and in a relatively singular experience. I do not want to imply that personal experience is an unsuitable form of evidence. As you will see in my next chapter on embodied rhetoric, I believe personal experience often to be a critical form of evidence. The problem Lori was having, and the problem many of us (myself included) often have, is that personal experience is sometimes the *only* form of evidence used to formulate a claim. When our own personal experiences seem so clear, it is often difficult to imagine the experiences of others that may differ from our own.

In Lori's case, she imagined that "the university" simply did not want to finance a larger gym, or did not care about the students' desire for a larger facility. In order to forward her own claim, she put claims in other peoples' mouths. This might be true, I told her, but I don't know because I haven't done the research. And neither had she. In terms of listening rhetorically, Lori had yet to analyze either the claims or the cultural logics that allowed those claims to function. By the time she wrote her first draft, however, Lori had completed much of that initial research. I want to spend some time looking at sections of Lori's rough draft.

In her rough draft, Lori made sure to identify the stakeholders in this issue, something I specifically called for in the assignment description. Lori explains, "There are a few different sides to looking at the size issue of the Center: the views of the students; the views of the management and directors of the Center; the topic of money, which mostly deals with parents or guardians who are paying for tuition; and the Vice President of Student and Academic Services Mark Rubenstein." She then quickly shifts

gears, attempting to talk about the claims and cultural logics of each of these stakeholders. For the sake of brevity, I will illustrate how Lori attempted to listen rhetorically to the claims and cultural logics of one stakeholder: the parents.

Lori correctly, I believe, identifies money as one of the major factors in this issue and points out that not only would the university have to find enough money for renovation or reconstruction, but some of that money would come from tuition and fees and, for many students, that means directly out of their parents' pockets. "This increase of tuition becomes a problem," she explains, "when discussing parents who pay for their children's schooling who care more about their children's proper education rather than a nicer work out facility."<sup>xlvi</sup> She then very quickly moves on to talk about the Vice President of Student and Academic Services.

In regards to Lori's discussion of parental finances, I write, "More here. You're getting at an underlying value and assumption, but keep pushing. What do parents seem to assume about the role of the university? About the gym? About their children? You need to do more to analyze the cultural logics underlying this possible claim. Also, be careful with your tone. As a reader, I get a little defensive on the parents' behalf." In conference, Lori and I talked about this issue of tone, as well as how to push her analysis further. But Lori felt defensive, believing that the size of the gym was being overlooked in favor of education.

Looking back at my comments now, and remembering my conference with Lori, I wonder how I might have listened rhetorically to my own discourse as well as to Lori's. Not normally a defensive or resistant student, Lori seemed frustrated by our conversation. Some of this may have been frustration over having to maintain that stance of openness,

and some may have been frustration over having to spend more time revising a draft than she would have liked. But I wonder if Lori was responding to my identification with the parents she references here. Not a parent myself, I do know how difficult it was for my own parents to help with educational costs. I hear myself, too, pulling rank in these comments, phrasing my response as if Lori had perhaps not worked hard enough to analyze the underlying cultural logics. In fact, I know Lori as a conscientious and hard-working student. Had I taken a moment to listen for the issues of power inherent in this conversation between student and instructor, I might have minimized her resistance.

I do not want to dismiss my comments, however, as Lori *did* need to deepen her analysis. For one, she needed to actually *talk* to parents in order to listen to them, which she did in her later draft. She also needed to provide more information about the underlying values and assumptions, not only to meet the requirements of the assignment, but to allow her to better understand those with viewpoints different than her own.

In many ways, Lori accomplished these goals. In her final draft, Lori has revised her analysis of a potential parental stance. This time she writes:

Parents have one value in mind when thinking about their children attending the University of New Hampshire, and that value is the children themselves. They value their children's health, education, and happiness. Parents value their children and they are usually willing to go the length that it takes for their children to attend college and get a higher education whether that be by saving up money for years or through student loans. Through their own experience they know that education is bottom line the most important aspect of anyone's life.



She continues by saying:

Parents who value their children and a proper education, also value their children's health and physical fitness. Parents are torn in what to believe is the best for their children in this situation. They know that education is what they are paying for first and foremost, but they also want their kids to be healthy and to be active and happy. They know that their money should be paying for their children's schooling and educational needs but wonder if it is worth the money to finance a larger gym.

I find a number of things compelling about this revision. First, Lori seems to have spent more time trying to put herself in parents' shoes, as it were. She has actually talked to a few parents (although not enough to be statistically relevant) and expanded her discussion of possible values and belief systems in which parents may be functioning. She realizes that she cannot speak for all parents, but in thinking about the underlying values and assumptions, she seems now to realize that the issue is complicated and perhaps not an easy decision for parents.

Of course Lori may simply be telling me what I want to hear. As is clear from my comments on her earlier draft as well as our discussion in conference, I was pushing Lori to spend more time developing the analysis of cultural logics in her essay. I was also hoping that Lori would try to suspend her own judgment until after she had completed her analysis. And she has done just that. In another section of her revised draft, a section in which Lori discusses the actual cost of renovating the gym, she exclaims her surprise at learning the actual cost of renovation from the director of the Hamel Recreation Center. Lori explains, "it would cost about \$175 per square foot which would add up to

\$18,274,375 if the Hamel Recreation Center was replicated. This news came as a shock to me and he [the director of the fitness facility] began to tell me that many students think it is their fault [the director and facility manager] nothing has been done but in all reality the money just isn't there." When we talked in class about her project, Lori seemed genuinely shocked at the price of renovating the gym (as did a number of other students in the class). When Lori was able to approach these texts in a stance of openness and listen to the claims and cultural logics underlying those claims, Lori was able to reconsider her original position on this project. She still believed that the Hamel Recreation Center was too small to serve the university population, but now proposed building a smaller auxiliary gym near the freshman dorms. Additionally, at the end of this project Lori better understood the position of parents, other students, and the university administration.

In her final survey, Lori expressed her thoughts on listening rhetorically, both in the context of the campus issue project and the class in general, stating that, "At first it was hard for me to grasp the idea of rhetorical listening because it is the easiest to just see your own side of an argument but I think this is a lesson that the class definitely benefited from and should be used more in upcoming years." Lori also noted that, in terms of the campus issue project, listening rhetorically allowed her to think deeply about what the issue meant "to all of the stakeholders involved" and "allowed me to see everyone's point of view on the topic."

Would this sort of shift in perception have been possible without rhetorical listening? Of course. Students have long been asked to analyze issues without voicing their own opinions. They are often asked to look at many sides of an issue and try to

imagine why people hold the opinions that they do. But the value in listening rhetorically isn't really in the results, although I would argue that rhetorical listening can lead to the results I have discussed here. Instead, the value of rhetorical listening is in the act itself, in the intent, and in the attempt. At the 1996 Midwest Sociological Society's annual meeting, sociologist Barbara Sherman Heyl hoped that

respect for hearing different viewpoints out there can help guide us in our own relations with one another. It is possible that, though our differing stances separate us, they could be useful, given the complexity of the social worlds we are trying to understand. We will only ever understand them partially, but there are human gains to be made by *trying* in a respectful way to understand. (13-14 emphasis in original)

This, I believe, is what Lori is doing, if only in a small way. While not addressing heaving-hitting topics like race, class, or gender, in this project Lori begins to work toward understanding and communicating with others. She works to understand differing viewpoints not to refute them or to hold mastery over those who have such opinions, but to understand them. Rhetorical listening provides one such way to do this, to try to understand, respectfully, our differing stances and in so doing to hopefully connect us.

Rhetorical listening as a framework for analysis helped Lori to better hear the divergent viewpoints, assumptions, and values that were at play in her project. It also helped her, I believe, to better hear her own discourses. In the next section, I show how listening rhetorically and a pedagogy of rhetorical listening helped both students and I better hear differing power dynamics and troubled identifications in the context of a verbal discussion surrounding a hot-button topic: same-sex marriage.

### **Rhetorical Listening in Classroom Conversation**

During the time in which students and I were exploring rhetorical listening as a theory and practice, we were also reading about same-sex marriage.<sup>xlvi</sup> Students and I spent two days discussing the readings, including pieces supporting same-sex marriage, those against same-sex marriage, and one article in which the author is against marriage in general. Students and I spent time analyzing the claims and cultural logics that allowed those claims to function, already practicing one of the tenets of rhetorical listening. Once we felt we had a decent grasp on the claims and cultural logics of each author and text, I had planned to use our next class period to discuss which arguments seemed most persuasive and why, allowing students to engage in both rhetorical listening practices and more traditional analyses. The discussion that ensued, however, caught me completely off-guard, not because of its content, but because of the way it was framed and introduced, and because of the way it resonated with rhetorical listening.

Of eighteen students present that day, thirteen entered the initial discussion. Of those thirteen, six couched their remarks with some version of “I’m not gay, but . . .” The first student to speak, in fact, began by saying, “I’m not gay, but I support gay marriage.” His quick pause was then met with support from another student, this one female, who said, “I’m not either . . . gay I mean . . . but I think you should be able to marry whoever you want.” Another male student: “Yeah, I mean, I’m straight and nobody’s telling me who I can marry. They don’t, like, get to pick the girl or anything.” Six out of thirteen students felt the need, in some way, to declare their heterosexuality.<sup>xlvi</sup> To declare what they saw as both their difference and their similarity: their difference or separation from

what many of them identified as an other—someone who is gay—and their similarity to, they seemed to imagine, the straight students in the room. In that moment, their attempts to identify and disidentify were clearly articulated, if underdeveloped. While many of these students might imagine themselves to be, and might actually be, open-minded and inclusive, their anxiety about being misidentified is palpable in their exchange. And that anxiety manifested in their desire to make their identifications and disidentifications clear.

This moment of what I would call “identification anxiety” is particularly interesting given that, until this point, most students had not felt the need to express their sexuality, at least not in a public forum (it’s possible that some students talked about this in their small groups in a more casual way).<sup>xlix</sup> But this particular topic—same-sex marriage—sparked the desire in many students to voice their (hetero)sexuality, to clarify their identification with what we might consider the “norm.” It seems that until we, as a class, began to discuss issues of sexuality, students in the group assumed that norm. They seemed to assume that those around them were straight and that their own heterosexuality, their own confirmation to the norm, would in turn be assumed by their classmates. But by voicing their support for gay marriage, that assumption seemed to be threatened, causing students to feel the need to clarify their own orientations—their own heterosexual orientations.

The students’ desire to identify their sexuality is not the problem. What concerned me in this moment, concerns me still, is the speed with which they voiced these identifications. Of course many of the students in this class may have often reflected on their own sexual orientation. But they voiced these identifications without reflection. And

such quick identifications can, as Ratcliffe reminds us, obscure power dynamics at work. It is in moments such as these that non-identification provides a tactic to listen for such hidden or muffled power dynamics. In fact, the moment of pause inherent in non-identification does more than just provide a space for reflection: it specifically calls for such reflection.

Working from a pedagogy of rhetorical listening helped me to better hear these quick identificatory practices, tuning my ear to moments such as these. But it also provided me with a strategy—non-identification—with which to help students start to hear these power dynamics, as well as with a framework—accountability—through which we might be able to talk about these dynamics.

Because my students seemed to be voicing their identifications without critical reflection, many of their opinions were voiced, but few were explored or more fully developed. With that in mind, I asked my students to first reflect in writing on their identifications. I asked that students freewrite for ten minutes, exploring with whom in this larger discussion about same-sex marriage they identify or disidentify and why. If they weren't sure about with whom they identify, I asked that they write about their uncertainty and where it might come from.<sup>1</sup> In this way, I asked that students try to listen rhetorically to their own discourses, pausing for a moment to consider their attempts to identify and disidentify, reminding them that non-identification allows for a space in which to reflect on such identificatory practices.

As a class, I then asked that we look not only at what was being said—moments of identification and disidentification—but what was *not* being said, including the cultural logics underlying these “claims.” Looking at values and assumptions that

prompted so many students to quickly align themselves with a heteronormative culture began to give voice to the power dynamics inherent in that culture. What assumptions were students making about homosexuality so that they felt the need to quickly declare their heterosexuality? What assumptions were they working against? What benefits were heterosexual students afforded that homosexual students were not? And how were we contributing to these unequal power dynamics by feeling the need to reinforce the norm?

Such questions are difficult to address, and, as is often the case when talking about cultural categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, we can find ourselves sliding into the unproductive guilt and blame dynamic that Ratcliffe references. Having read and discussed processes of rhetorical listening, however, students and I tried to remind each other to work from within a framework of accountability instead, thinking through how all of us resist and perpetuate larger systems of power. Of course within the context of our particular conversation, students pointed out that one of the benefits of being heterosexual in this country is that one has the choice whether or not to marry. In most states, same sex couples do not have this choice. But we also talked about the less concrete benefits of claiming membership in the sexual majority, like not often having to really think about one's sexuality. Much as whites rarely have to think about the consequences or benefits of their race, heterosexuals rarely have to interrogate the consequences or benefits of their sexuality. As the assumed norm, heterosexuality is not examined in the way that homosexuality or bisexuality is.

Rhetorical listening presented a means for students and I to start to hear the power dynamics at play not only in this issue, but in our own discourses. The need to quickly identify with heterosexuality, and therefore distance the self from homosexuality, also

meant that students had a sense of what being identified as gay or lesbian in this culture can mean. For men, it can be seen as a sign of weakness and femininity. For women, a sign of manliness and lack of femininity. For both genders, it can mean the possibility of persecution, mocking, or shunning. But these were not associations that were voiced in the initial conversation. The moment of reflection in non-identification and the ability to talk through and listen to these associations in a framework of accountability allowed them to be spoken and heard, to be communicated.

Yet, looking back, I do not believe that students or I went far enough in our attempts to listen rhetorically. There were things that we still failed to hear, to recognize. One of those things was the silence in the room, the identifications that were not spoken. Five students that day chose not to join our conversation. I cannot say why. But I do know this: at least one student in the class was gay. While Lane was out to her family and friends, something she revealed in a discussion in another class I taught, she was not out to the students in this particular class. Lane had talked in a previous course about the conflicting pressures of voicing her sexuality, about voicing her identifications. On the one hand, she was frustrated by what she felt as society's desire to know. Straight students weren't (usually) pressured to out themselves as straight. Instead it was those marked as other that must declare their otherness. On the other hand, she did not want to appear ashamed of being gay. She did not want to seem as if she were hiding this part of herself. Further, she believed that, at times, to declare her homosexuality brought attention to the issue and reminded others that not everyone in the room was straight.

But in this discussion, Lane remained quiet. I regret now that I had not asked her about her reactions to our discussion, as I can now only speculate. Did Lane feel



silenced? Did she feel overwhelmed by her classmates' strong desire to declare their heterosexuality? Did she feel outnumbered? Or was her silence more strategic? Was she waiting, as Cheryl Glenn might suggest, for the right moment? Or perhaps remaining silent to protect herself? Looking back, this was a moment in which I fell short in my attempts to practice a pedagogy of rhetorical listening. While I heard what was not being said, I was unsure how to address this gap. In fact, I am still uncertain about what I should have done in this moment. Certainly, it was/is not my place to out Lane. But working from a pedagogy of rhetorical listening, I wish I would have asked that both students and I take a moment to consider what was not being said, to listen for those viewpoints that we were not hearing. Such a move might have let us hear those who do not identify as strictly heterosexual, even if they were not speaking in this particular classroom. We might have been able to give voice to those identifications in a way that I was, at the time, unable to.

I regret not taking advantage of this moment because there were troubled identifications in the classroom that day, and the potential for better cross-cultural communication. Trying harder to listen for those gaps might have also held both students and myself more accountable for what we were failing to hear (or perhaps simply failing to address). But because I was unable to, at the time, listen for what was not being said, we missed that opportunity. I wonder now what that conversation might have looked like. How we might have communicated across difference. I do think, though, that our attempts to listen to our own discourses gave us a way to begin to imagine such a conversation, one where the differentials in power and privilege are more clear, particularly to those who are in the majority and have the choice to listen in such ways or

not. In making those identifications more conscious, I hope that we opened spaces in which we might better hear each other, spaces where we tried to understand our differences and in doing so, communicate and connect.

## CHAPTER 4

### **BODY OF KNOWLEDGE: EMBODIED WRITING, EMBODIED PEDAGOGY**

*“Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain  
lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there.”*

Jeanette Winterson

In 2005 the Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) conference was held in Houghton, Michigan, a town of about 7,000 but part of one of the larger counties in the Upper (Keweenaw) Peninsula of Michigan. Home of Michigan Tech, the area is generally referred to as Houghton-Hancock, referencing the two cities separated only by a sliver of Portage Lake. It's beautiful country, especially in the fall. October in the U.P. is often bright and cold, with foliage that rivals New England. In the morning, you can see your breath and clouds move quickly across the sky, casting shadows on the water. Houghton—most of the U.P.—is as much home to me as where I grew up in Northern Wisconsin and, although I've spent much less time there than here, it's somehow more home to me than New Hampshire. When I'm there, I can breathe. I feel my shoulders relax. I settle into my hips. I'm comfortable in that space.

Getting to the conference that October was, as some of you may remember, not an easy task. The airport in town is comical, something out of a Coen brothers movie: there's one gate and one plane that flies in and out of the airport about twice a day. In

good weather. If you're lucky. We were not lucky. Meagan—a friend and colleague—and I flew from Boston to Minneapolis where we were told that our flight was cancelled. As was the next flight, and the next one. But, and I'm still genuinely confused about how this happened, they had a bus that needed to go back to Houghton. That night. Would we like to take it? I'm not sure if it was the surprise of this unexpected solution, relief at not having to possibly spend the day or night in the airport, or the dedication of this group of women all standing at the same gate, all trying to get to a small town in Northern Michigan, but almost all of us boarded the bus, ready for a nine hour ride to the U.P.

Bodies are difficult to ignore on a bus, especially on a long bus ride. I've often thought about college and even high school athletes who do this often, load themselves onto a bus and travel together for hours. There's something romantic about it, when seen from afar. I see it here at UNH, tall women in long shorts or baggy sweatpants, tell-tale white cords running from their ears, bags slung over shoulders, ducking as they get onto a bus. I think, sometimes, about the camaraderie that must engender. The way that cramped space must contribute to the sense of closeness, both physical and emotional, the way that closeness must contribute to the creation of a team. But I don't wish to romanticize the ride from Minneapolis to Houghton. The *fact* of the ride (this serendipitous bus) and the *idea* of the ride (the sacrifice made, the potential for some sort of bonding), those were romantic. But the ride itself was a lesson in space and bodies. A perfect introduction, in many ways, to the conference itself.

I remember two things very clearly from that trip. The first is Meagan's body and my own. Both of us are, I think, somewhat shy among strangers, so we stuck close together, sitting next to each other, not sure how much space there would be and not

willing to risk sitting next to someone we didn't know. For nine hours we sat literally shoulder to shoulder, thighs and knees touching, unable or unwilling to remain in that tensed posture that would allow for a half an inch of space between us. I remember the physical space of that bus, my own face pressed against a window, watching a very familiar landscape pass me by. I remember having a conversation early on, Meagan and I agreeing that we were just going to have to be comfortable sitting this close for this long. I remember that we made jokes about being attached at the hip. Both of us needing to get comfortable fast because there were nine hours of highway in front of us. Nine hours of bodies touching.

I remember that, the literal feel of it, of someone pressed against me for nine hours. Not comfortable or uncomfortable. Just there.<sup>li</sup>

I remember that, and I remember stopping for gas.

It didn't take me long to realize that the only way to get from Minneapolis to Houghton, the *only* way, was to take Highway 2. And Highway 2 runs right through my hometown. I usually get home twice a year, if I'm lucky, once in the summer and once for Christmas. I was homesick, and the thought of driving through my hometown, my parents and sister so close—I didn't know what to do with that information. For the five hours from Minneapolis to Ashland it weighed on me. I talked about it a little with Meagan, but only a little, because the thought of it almost made me cry. To be there. To be home. And not to be able to stay, to see my family, not to really *be* home.

So when the bus actually *pulled over* in my hometown, stopping at the gas station next to the Dairy Queen, I was paralyzed. People were getting off the bus, getting snacks in the gas station, looking for a bathroom. But I was stuck. I got out of my seat and paced

the narrow aisle. Trapped. I wasn't sure I could do it. I wasn't sure I could step off that bus, put my foot on very familiar ground, not metaphorically, *literally*, and get back on. There was something about physically being home, about taking my body off of the bus and putting it in my hometown. It didn't seem possible.

Shirley Logan was on the bus with us and as I paced and stood still, paced and stood still, she stretched her legs and back, watching me. "You want off?" she asked, worried she was in my way. "I don't know. I don't know," I repeated, clearly flustered. "This is my hometown." "No!" She looked shocked. I can't blame her. What are the odds? "I don't know," I repeated, "I don't know what to do." "Honey," she said, "you should take a walk."

I'm not sure I can explain any of it. Why I was nearly paralyzed on that bus. Why setting foot, literally setting foot, on the ground seemed so impossible. Surreal and ultra-real together. The feeling in my gut. The materiality of that moment. Feeling both outside myself and also completely aware of my body in this space, in a space that in many ways I claimed as my own, but not staying so not really there in any way that mattered. Any way that made a difference. I wandered into the gas station as if I were just another one of the women off the bus, a woman with no particular connection to this place. And across the wrack of gum and Skittles, one of the other women caught my eye and said, "Isn't this weird? Don't you feel like you're in the middle of nowhere? Like we're literally nowhere? It's like the road to hell or something. I guess there's a girl on the bus who's from here. Can you imagine? How could anyone live here?"

She must have seen it in my eyes.

"That's you, isn't it?"

Houghton, Michigan is about three and a half hours from Marquette, Michigan, where my oldest sister lives. So on the day I was to present a paper about embodied rhetoric, she and her two oldest girls drove down to see me. Jill brought the girls—Elenor, twelve, and Asa, ten—in part to see smart women having smart conversations. She wanted to show them what women can do. Before we began, she checked with the other women on my panel to make sure it was okay that the girls sit in. One woman seemed hesitant, explaining that it was fine with her, but that she was talking about Lacan and would be using words like phallus and penis and vagina and was worried that the girls would be uncomfortable. They weren't. They were barely paying attention, especially to a paper on Lacan.

But Jill was paying close attention as this woman explained that we should dismiss the phallus as signifier, replacing it instead with the umbilical cord. She argued that the umbilical cord was a more inclusive, in fact a utopian symbol of unity in which fluids and bodies were connected, in which life flowed both ways. In which both males and females could equally share.

Hers was the last paper of the panel and when it was time for questions, Jill's hand went up. "I think I understand what you're arguing here and from a theoretical perspective it makes a lot of sense to me but, well, do you have children?" The woman shook her head no. "See, this one," Jill said, pointing to a now red-faced Elenor, "had the cord wrapped around her neck when she was born. It was literally choking the life out of her. It almost killed her. And I'm thinking about my husband and how he can't really be on the other end of that umbilical cord in the way that I was or you might be. It seems

better than the phallus, but I think you want to maybe complicate your understanding of how that whole umbilical thing works.” That’s my sister. On a panel of women talking about embodied rhetoric, she was the only one to reference her own body, her own lived experience, in such a material way, pointing out the ways in which theory and body are intimately connected, and pointing out how that connection is sometimes forgotten, ignored, sidestepped, or erased.

I don’t know if it’s irony, serendipity, or acute awareness that connected my body so intimately and materially on a trip to a conference at which I was talking about embodied rhetoric. But bodies were on my mind during the nine hour bus ride, my brief moment at home, my panel presentation, and in so many other moments during that conference: Kelly crying as she practiced her talk, then crying as she gave it, a roomful of women standing and applauding when she finished, hugging her before they left; me, hesitantly touching the arm of Min-Zhan Lu, so intimidated by this woman, but wanting to talk to her; Elenor and Asa standing on a rocky beach, bare feet in the incredibly cold water, hair whipping behind them, and me asking weren’t they cold, and the two of them smiling and nodding, and fearless Asa stepping further into the water; Asa throwing a rock into the lake and falling down with the momentum of it, a gorgeous child who has never had much control over the movings of her own body.

I tell you these stories in order to help you understand my experience of that conference, because that conference is, for me, wrapped up in bodily experience. The text of that conference is intertwined with my own bodily reactions and in my acute awareness of the bodies of others. My understanding of embodied rhetoric and embodied



knowledge was made clearer with my sister's birth narrative. It was made clearer in the nine hours of body against body on the bus. And it was made clearer in my gut reactions to Kelly's crying, and to the women in the room who rushed up to hold her.

But your experience of that conference, if you were there, was probably different. And many of you were not there. So what do we, as scholars and teachers, do with these stories, with my insistence on storying the body? That's an incredibly complicated question, but it's one I hope to answer in this chapter. First, I move away from this narrative thread in order to flesh out (metaphor/imagery/pun intended) the varied definitions of embodied writing, grappling with the limitations and dangers of an embodied rhetoric and embodied writing, and providing some historical, theoretical, and biological support for a focus on the body and/in language. I then offer my own working definition, drawing together many of the aspects of embodied rhetoric and writing that scholars before me have discussed. Finally, I turn again to my classroom, illustrating my attempts to construct an embodied pedagogy and my students' attempts to understand and enact practices of embodied rhetoric. And while I have said that I will move away from narrative, it is difficult, and I would argue problematic, to discuss embodied rhetoric without connecting that discussion to the body itself, in ways both metaphorical (as in my use of the terms "flesh out," and "grappling" earlier in this paragraph), and autobiographical. The body, I argue, haunts all of our texts. The apparition is just more clearly defined in some than in others.

The preceding examples (and the way in which I write about them) offer illustrations of what I argue are three major categories of embodied writing: embodied language, embodied response, and embodied rhetoric. This is not to say that these three

categories are a) mutually exclusive, or b) the only ways in which one could categorize embodied writing. These three categories overlap, inform each other, even bleed into each other. And scholars interested in embodiment rarely consider or utilize just one category. Still, I find it useful to note the different uses and approaches that seem to be functioning when people talk about embodied writing or embodied rhetoric, if for no other reason than to keep in mind that not everyone is talking about the same thing when they use these terms. In brief, I define embodied language as the use of terms, metaphors, and analogies that reference, intentionally or not, the body itself. Embodied response centers around bodily reactions to texts, what we might call a “gut reaction.” Embodied rhetoric is a conscious decision to include embodied reactions and embodied knowledge as a form of meaning making within a text. Throughout this chapter, I will unpack these terms more fully, beginning with embodied language.

### **Embodied Language**

In terms of the vignettes that open this chapter, I can see embodied language everywhere as I talk about hips and shoulders, crying and holding. I see embodied language in the paragraphs above as I insist that I will “flesh out” and “grapple” with terms—both phrasings that call forth images of the body. As Debra Hawhee points out, such connections between language and the body were common in Greek culture. In fact, there was substantial slippage between terminology used to describe rhetoric and that used to describe athletics. Hawhee uses the term “stasis” as one example. Stasis was used not only as a reference to one’s rhetorical positioning or one’s stance on an issue, but also one’s position, stance, or posture in boxing (33). Hawhee explains that the *agon* was “a

point of cultural connection between athletics and rhetoric,” and therefore between the body and language (15).

While the link between bodies and language has a long history in rhetoric, the place of the body in the present academy, even in composition and rhetoric, is complicated. Drawing on a Cartesian notion of rational thought in which truth can be found through intellect, not sensory experience, the academy has long reflected, even encouraged, what we now commonly refer to as the mind/body split.<sup>lii</sup> In such a dualistic framework, the rational mind is contrasted with the irrational body. Because women are culturally coded as the bearers of emotion in this society, this split is often gender coded as well, where men are imagined to be rational and women, emotional. The effects of such a (presumed) split can be devastating for both genders. Within the walls of the academy, however, such a binary distinction makes it particularly difficult for women (although not only women) to “prove themselves” as intellectuals. One of the ways in which they can begin to do so, however, is by denying their female bodies.

Shari Stenberg, drawing on the work of scholars such as Linda Brodkey and Michelle Fine and Jill Eichhorn, remarks that “being taken seriously as intellectuals requires a denial of all those aspects of one’s identity marked ‘female’—whether by using clothing to hide one’s female shape or refusing to engage in scholarship traditionally associated with female ways of knowing” (49). Such scholarship includes work on autobiography, women’s writing, emotion, and embodiment—all of which, in some way, draw attention to the body.

Embodied language, embodied response, and embodied rhetoric as I define these terms also all draw attention back to the body, marking it not only as a presence, but also

as a source of knowledge. This effectively complicates the mind/body split, but can do so at a cost. For example, while embodied language use may seem a less troublesome positioning of the body in academia, because it references the body itself (in terms like “fleshing out,” or “wrestling with,”), it is hardly uncomplicated. For one, *any* mention of the body in academic work can garner skeptic responses. While terms and phrases such as *wrestling* or *grappling* with an idea have become normal parlance in academic writing, sustained use of bodily references tends to provoke attention, both positive and negative (as we will see in a moment). Perhaps more importantly, because embodied language speaks from and to bodies, it can carry multiple meanings, acting as a catalyst for both identification and disidentification. The work of Peter Elbow serves as one such example.

As Kate Ronald and Hephzibah Roskelly show, Elbow’s work is rife with what I am calling embodied language. They note that Elbow makes space for “the role of the body—in all his writing” (210). Moreover, “he does so in an ‘erotic,’ that is, in a sensory, engaging, and powerful, way . . . in his own speech, in the metaphors he chooses, and in the careful way he presents himself” (210). In brief, the authors “argue that Elbow’s voice is embodied—physical and present—in ways that bring an audience close both to Elbow’s persona and to his ideas about writing and in ways that few academic writers attempt” (210). For example, Elbow uses images of eating, embracing (wrestling, holding, exercising), and seeing. Such references and metaphors, according to Ronald and Roskelly, situate the reader in Elbow’s argument; they “become his way to make meaning and his way to connect” (214). The authors conclude that “Elbow’s bodily metaphors not only call up the erotic to his readers in a physical sense, reminding us of the bodily act of writing and connecting with other people; in all his work, Elbow has

attempted to lead students to this sense of satisfaction with writing” as experienced through these metaphors (222). Because readers can relate to such bodily experiences as eating and embracing, and find satisfaction in many of these experiences, Elbow’s use of such terminology may help readers identify with the author. It may help readers feel closer to the work and, in turn, closer to the act of writing itself.

But just as the embodied language that Elbow employs here can serve to pull readers closer, it can also exclude readers. Will Banks explains how Elbow’s metaphor of the “marriage” between literature and composition leaves him (Banks) feeling “left out” because he, as a gay man, cannot marry. He wonders, “while Elbow *embodies* his understanding of English department rifts through the heteronormative trope of marriage, how would I embody it? And why do I feel so left out of his metaphor?” (29). Banks goes on to fill in the blank, fill in a metaphor for teaching writing that he might embody in a way that Elbow might not: picking up a trick or “walk[ing] to the dungeon at the Heretic in Atlanta” (29). By using embodied language that may serve to exclude many readers—whether gay, straight, or bi-sexual—Banks illustrates how such language can actually serve to keep some readers at bay, pushing them outside of the sense of inclusiveness that Ronald and Roskelly imagine, as Elbow’s marriage metaphor did for Banks.

The metaphors used by Banks and Elbow, at least for me, make very clear the varied effects of embodied language. I have to admit, with some embarrassment, that it did not occur to me that the metaphor of marriage might exclude readers. But Banks’ image of picking up a trick in a back hallway or heading down into the dungeon of a gay club *do* exclude me, at least in most ways. Having never had those experiences, I struggle

to imagine how teaching writing might be embodied in such ways. Such a positioning does, in fact, make me somewhat uncomfortable (who, for example, is the trick? Me? My students?).

Perhaps even more troubling is when embodied language feels threatening and violent to readers. In "Feminism and Composition: A Case for Conflict," Susan Jarratt draws attention to Elbow's embodied language when he writes about the Doubting and Believing Game, another discussion teeming with such language. Forgive me while I quote at length from Elbow, but it feels necessary in order for a reader to get a sense of the scope of this language use. Elbow explains that the doubting game "tends to reinforce those personal styles which the culture also defines as male: aggressive, thrusting, combative, competitive, and initiatory" (Elbow 180). He continues by noting that the doubting game "feels like clenching a muscle," "words like 'tight' and 'hard' characterize the energy in a good argument," "a good arguer . . . pierces to the center of things" (180). In the believing game, a "peculiar, delicate energy [is] required to keep something energetically open," it is the energy necessary to "keep a muscle from contracting. Perhaps it is like muscle *tonus*: though the muscle is not sagging or limp, neither is it tight or rigid" (180). "Trying to remain *open*," says Elbow, "is a kind of trying-to-not-try" (181). To ask intellectuals to do so often makes them feel as though all they can do "is just go soft and limp" (181). Discussing anxieties over the believing game, Elbow says:

I think we all fear, to a greater or lesser extent, being taken over, infected, or controlled by a bad or wrong idea. The believing game asks us, as it were, to sleep with any idea that comes down the road. To be

promiscuous. We will turn into the girl who just can't say no. A yes-man. A flunky. A slave. Someone who can be made to believe anything. A large opening that anything can be poured into. Force-fed. Raped. (185)

Elbow continues by saying that we fear being infected by what is "alien" yet "often enough in life we must submit to *contact* with such material, but actually taking it inside is too much" (186). Yet because you can never keep all things alien, "you have to let them in" (186). Such a stance may be dangerous, concedes Elbow, yet one needs to learn how to "immerse the self *gradually* in the element perceived as dangerous" (187).

For Jarratt, Elbow's discussion raises two problems. The first, as I discussed in Chapter 1, is that the believing game reinforces for female students a passivity in which they must accept everything offered to them, asking that they remain silent, even if they disagree with something the author has written. But Jarratt also gestures to the possible responses to Elbow's embodied language, including her own response, when she writes "Only read Elbow's rhetoric of surrender as female subject, which I must do, and that positioning becomes frighteningly clear" (274). Such a positioning, according to Jarratt, "puts a woman . . . in a dangerous stance" (274). Her use of the term "dangerous" here is telling. Not only is the passivity that Elbow advocates potentially dangerous for women as (at least according to Jarratt) it asks that women remain silent, but that term also references the physical danger associated with some of Elbow's language: promiscuity, force-feeding, and rape.<sup>liii</sup>

Like Jarratt, I am disturbed by this sexualized language, particularly language that uses the term "raped" in what seems, to me, like a rather casual way. As a woman reading these passages, I bristle at the phrase "a girl who just can't say no," in a way that I don't

bristle at “yes-man,” in part, I believe, because of the sexual, gendered, and sometimes violent connotations that swirl around the girl who “just can’t say no.” I imagine males reading these sections might respond differently than I do to the assertion that intellectuals might just “go soft and limp.” I do not mean to imply here that Elbow *intended* to make readers feel uncomfortable or, at times, even threatened. But, as Krista Ratcliffe has reminded us, sometimes the intent and the effects of language are strikingly different (89). Regardless of intent, the effect of these passages is, at least for me, bodily. And the effects of particular embodied language use might be different for any given reader based in part on that reader’s sexuality, gender, race, class, able-bodiedness, or size, for example. And this is one of the things that makes embodied language so tricky. Yes, it can serve to bring a reader closer to the writer, to hail the reader, to connect with the reader. But it can also push readers away, threaten them, disturb them, alienate and exclude them. Like all rhetorical choices, the decision to use embodied language must be well-considered.

### **Embodied Response**

The above discussion of the effects of embodied language leads us into the realm of what I am calling embodied response. Embodied response references emotional and physical responses, as well as what we often call “gut reactions.” As a way of meaning-making that is rooted so completely in the body, embodied response is rarely legitimated in academia. Even so, I would argue that such response is a driving force behind much scholarly activity. For example, Betty Smith Franklin notes that her body, like all of ours, reacts when she encounters something exciting or boring, explaining, “As I listen to



someone's powerful story, the hair on my arms stands up. When I am held captive in a meeting listening to the droning of endless cover stories, I feel a deadening tension in my lower back" (18). Smith Franklin argues that "we know each other and ourselves through our bodies," (18). Sara Ahmed reflects this concept when she writes that "knowledge cannot be separated from the bodily world of feeling and sensation; knowledge is bound up with what makes us sweat, shudder, tremble, all those feelings that are crucially felt on the bodily surface, the skin surface where we touch and are touched by the world" (171). And as Madeline Grumet points out, "whatever we have noticed, touched, and grabbed probably becomes part of our intuitive sense of the world" (252). Expanding on this notion, Grumet contends that "we see what we look for, and what we look for is constituted not only by what my body can do, but also what it cannot do" (253-4). In some ways, our bodies constitute our noetic fields—what can and cannot be known. While I can conceive of flight even though I cannot fly, I can only conceive of flight because I, in my body, have both felt close to flight (jumping off of picnic tables, running very fast, bouncing on a trampoline) and very far from flight. It is through my body, our bodies, that we know the world.

Sometimes this knowing is even more concrete and physical. In her 2004 article "Words Made Flesh: Fusing Imagery and Language in a Polymorphic Literacy," Kristie Fleckenstein relates the story of how her five-year-old daughter, Anna, learns how to draw a star. Her hand over her daughter's, Fleckenstein guides Anna through the motions, whispering "up down up over down" as the two of them make stars on the page. Fleckenstein gradually lets go of Anna's hand and the young girl continues to draw rough stars on her own. Anna's four-year-old sister asks Anna to teach her how to make stars,

too. “No, Baby, I can’t,” Anna replies, “I don’t know how. Only my hand knows” (qtd. in Fleckenstein 612).

Of course the mind/body distinction here is not only problematic, it’s also overly-simplified, but we cannot, I think, dismiss Anna’s experience. For her at that moment, only her hand knew how to make a star, or at least that’s the way it felt to her. Her mind doesn’t seem to have processed the information in a way that would allow Anna to explain it to her sister. I imagine the delight in this new skill, the making of stars, but also the fear that if the hand stops, the skill will be lost. I have certainly had similar experiences, relying primarily on muscle memory, and confident that if I think about something too much (a phone number, my PIN number, juggling, my high school locker combination), I won’t be able to accomplish my task. My hand, at those points, seems to know better than my mind. Such knowledge, it often seems, is of the body.

This is one way in which we might say that we make sense of the world through our bodies. We create new knowledge based on previous sensuous experience. We learn how to craft stars not only by the guiding of one hand on another, but by the repetition of bodily motion, a repetition that sometimes seems to be (isn’t, of course, but often seems to be) separate from a cognitive or intellectual process. But we also make sense of the world through our bodies in a very different way, as authors George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain in their book *Metaphors We Live By*. Lakoff and Johnson explain that many of our metaphors, “arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that they function as they do in our physical environment” (14). In this way, we quite literally make sense of our environments, make sense of the world, through our bodies,

not only through touch and reaction, but also through metaphors, structuring agents that are based on bodies.<sup>liv</sup>

What does this mean for academics and scholars? We, too, make sense of our worlds through our bodies and our embodied responses. Banks, for example, writes about his reaction to a teacher who reminded him of his bullying older brother, explaining that the professor's booming voice made Banks "uncomfortable," and left him "feeling insecure and meek" (25). Because the professor's demeanor in class reminded Banks of his older brother, with whom he had never won an argument, Banks wonders if he was projecting, or "mapping one body onto another and responding through my body" (26). Banks further contends that the text of that class is now wrapped up in his bodily reaction to that teacher. He cannot separate the two (26). He has made sense of that class, and his experience of that class, in part through his embodied response to it. He has made sense of the world through his body. Similarly, Jane E. Hindman, in her article, "Writing an Important Body of Scholarship: A Proposal for an Embodied Rhetoric of Professional Practice," comments on her physical reaction to her graduate students' response to assigned readings, in particular those surrounding the foundationalist/anti-foundationalist conversation in composition and rhetoric.<sup>lv</sup> Hindman reveals that in this classroom moment her "visceral responses were many," including frustration marked by an elevated heart rate and flushed skin (113). Yet, because the classroom is often imagined as a place of mind, of intellect, and not emotion, Hindman tried to keep such reactions hidden. Her dissatisfaction with her students' responses to this debate, and at her own unwillingness to reveal her emotional reaction to her students, "produced and organized [her] professional process of producing knowledge," leading Hindman to develop her theories

about embodied writing (112). Hindman's emotional and embodied response not only sparked a research project, it informed her construction of theories of embodiment and embodied rhetoric, theories that draw attention to the role of emotion and the body in academic work.

Embodied response, then, is closely linked to emotion. And although such connections may not be valued or sanctioned in the academy, some scholars are beginning to talk about the role that emotion *does* play in our academic work. Joy Ritchie, for example, explored the generative power of anger in her 2006 CCCC talk. And bell hooks has explained that rage can be a strong motivating factor for people who are oppressed, sparking an examination of the means of oppression in their lives and a determination to act (Crawford 683). I would imagine the marginalia of most scholars' books and articles would reveal strong emotional responses to these texts. And my hunch is that these reactions often prompted scholars to some form of academic action—a change in pedagogy, the writing of a response article, the launching of a new research project.

It is one thing, however, to draw on embodied response as a generative force. It is another to include such responses in the writing itself. The inclusion of embodied response and emotion in professional academic writing has often been met with resistance. In the next section I hope to show how the strategic use of embodied language and embodied response (including emotional responses)—what I am calling “embodied rhetoric”—can work toward disrupting an assumed authorial mastery. Furthermore, I believe that embodied rhetoric can answer feminists' calls for a politics of location, providing scholars with strategies for recognizing difference.

### **Embodied Rhetoric**

Thus far I have been attempting to make a distinction between what I am calling embodied language and embodied response. In this section I would like to turn to embodied rhetoric, offering a definition for an embodied rhetoric, then exploring some of the possibilities and critiques of such rhetoric. Ultimately, I hope to illustrate how by drawing attention to material bodies and lived experiences, embodied rhetoric can help scholars practice a politics of location in their work. I want to point out, however, that in defining embodied rhetoric I will also be complicating the categories that I have previously set up. I do this for two reasons: the first is that I believe that strictly delineated categories, while helpful and necessary for preliminary acts of definition, ultimately belie the complexity inherent in most scholarly and theoretical terms and frameworks. The very act of complicating such categories points to ways in which categories often bleed into, overlap, and compromise each other. Such complexity is, I believe, productive in scholarly work.

Second, I complicate these categories by necessity, because I cannot talk about embodied rhetoric in the way that I want to here without calling forward my definitions of embodied language and embodied response. The category of embodied rhetoric encapsulates both of those terms. I would argue that embodied rhetoric always begins with (and therefore includes) embodied response. Embodied rhetoric as I will define it here also draws attention to the body, and therefore often includes aspects of embodied language as well. One might imagine these categories as a Venn diagram in which

embodied language and embodied response are circles with sections of overlap, both of which are almost completely encased within the larger circle of embodied rhetoric.

I should also note that a recognition of the body in rhetorical study is hardly new. Susan Kates writes about Hallie Quinn Brown as an embodied rhetor, Carol Mattingly draws attention to women's bodies in *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, Cheryl Glenn notes how women such as Anne Askew were able to use their positionalities as women, the very fact of their female bodies, to subvert dominant ideas about authorship and power, Montaigne often focused on his own bodily responses, even Aristotle wrote of the body. And of course this is only a very partial list. Yet scholars in composition and rhetoric have, throughout our short disciplinary history, often been asked to ignore the body in favor of the mind. To focus on mind, on intellect, on cool rationality, has provided our field with much-needed legitimacy. In an attempt to show that composition and rhetoric is a rigorous field that draws on theory and not just practice, scholars may have felt as though they should avoid what can be seen as a touchy-feely attention to emotion and reaction in order to perform the role of detached intellectual. But, as Jane Tompkins and others have noted, the role doesn't seem to fit as well as some of us might have hoped. I believe that embodied rhetoric provides scholars in composition and rhetoric (as well as students, as we will see in the section on pedagogical practice) with one strategy for highlighting the connection between the body and the mind, for acknowledging the connection between "professional" knowledge and lived experience, and for locating that knowledge in the body.

Embodied rhetoric, as I am using the term, is a conscious effort by an author to represent aspects of embodiment, including, but not limited to, lived experiences,

embodied responses, and social positionalities and standpoints within the text he or she is shaping. Furthermore, when practicing embodied rhetoric, the author attempts to decipher how these “material circumstances,” (Jones Royster “A View” 228) affect how he or she understands the world. We can turn again to Hindman who believes that scholars must “gesture to our bodies, our lives” (“Writing” 104). How might one do that? Hindman says, “I can mark my body’s presence when I author(ize) texts by calling to the surface at least some of the associations that my thinking passes through, associations evoked by my gender, race, class, sexual orientation, politics, and so on” (“Writing” 104). In one of the vignettes that the open this chapter, I believe my sister Jill employed an embodied rhetoric when she drew attention to the ways in which her body, as woman and mother, and her lived experiences in that body, influenced her thinking about the umbilical cord as a more utopian symbol for power and authority.

At least in terms of definition, the *how* of embodied rhetoric is relatively easy to grasp—although not always easy to enact. A more pressing question, particularly for scholars in composition and rhetoric, is *why*. Why would one choose to practice an embodied rhetoric? What purpose does it or might it serve? We might begin with the sentiments of Jones Royster who argues that:

knowledge is produced by someone and . . . its producers are not formless and invisible. They are embodied and in effect have passionate attachments by means of their embodiments. They are vested with vision, values, and habits; with ways of being and ways of doing. These ways of being and doing shape the question of what counts as knowledge, what knowing and doing mean, and what the consequences of knowledge and

action entail. It is important therefore, to specify attachments, to recognize who has produced the knowledge, what the bases of it are, what the material circumstances of its production entail. ("A View" 228)

Banks echoes Jones Royster when he remarks that it is "quite simply impossible (and irresponsible) to separate the producer of the text from the text itself. Our belief that we could make such a separation has allowed masculinist rhetorics to become 'universal' in modernist discourses because the bodies producing the discourse have been effectively erased, allowing them to become metonymies of experience and knowledge" (Banks 33). The belief, at least in professional circles, that we could erase the body in favor of the mind (as if the two were separable), imagines what Susan Bordo has called "a dis-embodied view from nowhere" (4).<sup>lvi</sup> Such a view assumes a sort of normed intellectualism, a seemingly utopian belief that place and body do not matter. That the academic, the intellectual, can transcend such material matters. But as all of these scholars draw attention to, there is no such dis-embodied place of nowhere. We are all situated bodies, situated in culture and language.

This dis-embodied view from nowhere assumes that, because bodies do not matter, "any *body* can stand in for another" (Banks 38). In some ways, this is a comforting thought. As members of minority groups struggle for recognition within the academy, the lack of embodiment in prose might lead one to believe that we're all on a level playing field. To be able to erase or ignore markers of difference, at least in written texts, might imply a sort of color/gender/sexuality-blindness. I am sometimes seduced by the thought of erasing the body, my body, in my texts. Because some of the markers of my identity are less valued than others.



Yet I am persuaded by Banks' argument that to ignore the body privileges the white masculinist discourse as universal. It, in effect, erases difference, subsuming all into a discourse that has traditionally been white, male, and privileged. This imagined view from nowhere seems like essentialism in a whole new fashion. A view from nowhere, a belief that bodies don't matter, seems much easier to imagine if one lives in a body that is not always already marked as other. It seems to imagine that others can forget their bodies, too. As bell hooks points out, "the person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body" (137). Who is asked to deny their body and who is asked to reveal is a question I believe we must continually ask ourselves.

The view from nowhere assumes, then, that each body is equally constructed, equally accepted, and equally provided for in this society. I believe we know that this is not the case. The way my body moves through this world is often different than the way that your body moves through this world. And it's different than the way my brother's does, my friend Tim's does, my niece Elenor's does, my friend Rui's does. To ignore the body in scholarship might, in some ways, aid those from minority groups, but only by asking them (us) to pass, to act as if their bodies, their experiences don't matter, to act as if they are white, heterosexual, able-bodied, privileged men. And that just doesn't sit right with me.

Instead, an attention to the body as reflected in an embodied rhetoric speaks to the concerns of Royster and Banks, as well as to Adrienne Rich's call for a "politics of location" in our scholarship. By locating a text *in the body*, writers utilizing an embodied rhetoric work against what might be seen as the potential hegemony of (some) academic discourse, thereby beginning to enact Rich's politics of location. But, as Gesa Kirsch and

Joy Ritchie have noted, a politics of location in composition scholarship is remarkably complicated. Kirsch and Ritchie focus primarily on issues of feminist research methodology in their article “Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research,” but their discussion of a politics of location is relevant to embodied rhetorics as well. Kirsch and Ritchie caution scholars that “it is not enough to claim the personal and locate ourselves in our scholarship and research” (140). Furthermore, drawing on Rich, the authors explain that we need to do more than “make the facile statements that often occur at the beginning of research articles, to say, ‘I am a white, middle-class woman from a Midwestern university doing research.’” (142). Instead, a politics of location must “challenge our conception of *who* we are in our work,” and must be “accompanied by a rigorously reflexive examination of ourselves as researchers” (142). As researchers, as scholars, as teachers, and, I would argue, as human beings.

Rich urges us to “begin, though, not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in—the body” (64). To do so allows Rich to “reclaim” her body, “to reconnect our thinking and speaking with the body of this particular living human individual” (65). This is what embodied rhetoric asks of the rhetor, to reconnect our thinking with our particular bodies. But, lest we forget, these are bodies both shaping and shaped by culture. And these bodies, and the cultures in which they live, are complex entities, not to be reduced to singular essential tags such as “woman” or “white.” These terms signify differently in different contexts, and the terms themselves are socially constructed. By locating our thinking in our particular bodies, scholars in composition and rhetoric—perhaps any field—need to keep in mind the cautions of postmodern

theorists, as well as the cautions of scholars such as Kirsch and Ritchie. Those cautions are (at least) two-fold.

The first caution comes from postmodern scholars who might argue that an embodied rhetoric, drawing from a politics of location that begins in the body, assumes a stable and unified body from which to speak. Foucault, Butler, any good postmodernist, would remind me that bodies are constructed, that social positionalities are performed, and that there is no unified body that needs to or could stand in for another. Bodies are texts and are therefore unstable and subject to shifting positionalities, reconstructing histories, transformation. To write *from* the body, as asked by an embodied rhetoric, one must *have* a body, and in a postmodern world there is no unified body from which to write.

This critique reminds scholars such as myself that positionalities shift in different contexts. The work of postmodern scholars forces me to keep in mind that my body is in some ways always already constructed by culture, written on by discourse. But that writing, I think, can take many different forms and can be read in a variety of ways. Bodies may be imagined as texts, as cyborgs, as discourse itself. But that does not dismiss the very real lived experiences of that flesh, of *people*, not metaphors. Because whether or not I imagine myself to be a unified Cartesian subject or a shifting, slippery postmodern amalgamation of discourses, someone hits the snooze button every morning. Someone looks back at me in the mirror. This body, my body, has been cut into, has had violence inflicted upon it, has inflicted violence upon others, has been ignored and silenced, has been touched and celebrated. This body, my body, moves through this particular world visually marked as white, overweight, and female. In less obvious ways

it is marked by class and assumed heterosexuality. This is how I am often read. So I turn to embodied rhetoric because I do not believe that one body can stand in for another. I believe that lived experiences in a specific body shape the ways in which that body, that person, makes sense of the world.

The second caution is that well-worn charge of essentialism, a critique often leveled at embodied rhetoric, and with good reason. Drawing attention to one's body as a locus for meaning-making can, if not carefully practiced, cause either thinker or reader to imagine that this particular body stands in for all bodies of a certain gender, race, class, or sexuality. In other words, if I say that my experiences in a female body lead me to such-and-such a claim, such a statement may be read (and could be intended to be read) as if I were saying that "as a woman, I think like this," as if all women think as I do because of our shared biology.<sup>lviii</sup> Drawing on the work of Sandra Harding, Kirsch and Ritchie caution that "claiming our experience, then, may be as inadequate for making claims to knowledge as traditional claims from objectivity are. Harding points out that 'our experience may lie to us' just as it has lied to male researchers who believed their positions were value-free or universal" (144). In other words, in speaking from our own experience we must always keep in mind that that experience is local, specific, and not universal.

In response to this essentialist critique, Kirsch and Ritchie ask that scholars "be unrelentingly self-reflective" (Kirsch and Ritchie 143), always keeping in mind how our own positionalities can not only help us make meaning of the world, but also keep hidden meanings not revealed by our positionalities. Hindman calls it "unflinching self-reflection" ("Making" 101). In other words, we must recognize that we cannot speak for

others, and that our own viewpoints are always limited by our experiences, standpoints, positionalities, and our bodies (and the ways in which they receive and are received in the world). We must constantly, unrelentingly, unflinchingly reflect on our own terministic screens and what these screens both obscure and draw into focus.

This reflexivity can refer not only to a reflection on our bodily experience and standpoints, but on our *professional* positionalities as well. Hindman extends her call for self-reflection by asking that academic writers practicing an embodied rhetoric make “gestures to the existing discursive conventions of the discipline,” drawing attention in the text to these conventions (“Making” 101). According to Hindman, this is necessary because in order to be heard in the academy, in order to construct the proper ethos, a writer must first prove that she understands the conventions, yet, in order to embody the rhetoric, the writer must also call attention to the fact that these *are* conventions, and that she is both working within them and intentionally challenging them. Hindman calls this an “interruption” that can unsettle the supposed mastery of an author who can work within these conventions. Those practicing embodied rhetoric can disrupt this mastery in order to reflect the writer’s positionality within the academy.

The writer’s positionality within the academy and her social positionality (including race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, able-bodiedness, age, size, etc.) are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, social positionality often affects standing within the academy. And standing within the academy often affects the ways in which one is “allowed” or sanctioned to write. Perhaps the most famous example is Jane Tompkins’ 1987 article “Me and My Shadow,” in which Tompkins highlights the intersections between her personal life and her professional life, arguing that her desire to separate the

two is quite simply a matter of academic conditioning (169). Tompkins comments on what she feels is an academic need to address a mistake in a colleague's article. Such an approach should, in a traditional model, be calculated, rational, professional, *intellectual*, and would leave the body at the proverbial door. Yet Tompkins breaks the academic mold by admitting that she doesn't know how to enter this debate (or conversation) with a colleague without leaving everything else—the grief she has over a friend who has recently committed suicide, her father's recent illness, her own bodily urges and needs—behind (173). Tompkins argues that there are connections between her personal and professional lives, that her marriage, her feminist identity and epistemology, her childhood, her reactions to a summer teach-in, her emotions, and her scholarship are all intertwined, informing one another. And because of this, she no longer wants to write as if these aspects of her life are mutually exclusive.

I am struck by Tompkins' enacting of what Hindman calls an "interruption," the way she draws attention to the conventions of academic writing (conventions that are happily being tested and stretched but which, I would argue, still stand as conventions). She explicitly explains what she is supposed to do in such a piece, but then attempts to undercut these expectations by including personal information, admitting emotion, and drawing attention to the contradictions that she feels in her life. Yet at the same time, Tompkins adheres to those conventions, performing the very act that she seems to want out of. In what might be read as a send up of the academic response essay, Tompkins still manages to find and exploit the hole she sees in Ellen Messer-Davidow's article, not just disagreeing—something I certainly don't want to imply we should stop doing—but disagreeing in the way that is sanctioned by the academy, drawing attention to the

shortcomings in Messer-Davidow's article in much the same way Tompkins would in any other response piece.

Of course, had she not included some of this form of writing, bowing to the conventions of the academy, I might never have been able to read her piece. It might not have been published. And including those sections does remind the reader of what so many of us are conditioned to do. Attack. Exploit. Disagree. And do it with cold precision.

In "Me and My Shadow," then, I see Tompkins drawing attention to her own embodied responses, using embodied rhetoric, and pointing out academic and professional conventions in order to subvert those conventions (even as she, in part, still works within them). Doing so illustrates for a reader that she can write as she has been taught she is not allowed to and still contribute to professional knowledge. In this case, part of that knowledge is an expanding of genre conventions. The form of the article itself helps to create and/or legitimate new professional practice. The self-reflection that Tompkins practices, itself a form of embodied rhetoric, illustrates the potential of such a rhetoric. It moves the personal beyond the private and places it squarely in the realm of the social and professional. Tompkins uses the inclusion of the body, as well as a reflection on professional practice, in order to critique the exclusion of the body in professional practice. In this way, an embodied rhetoric can disrupt what is often assumed to be an academic or professional mastery (by gesturing to conventions as conventions), and can rattle loose the privileged white masculinist discourse to which Banks draws attention.

This is, for me, the benefit of an embodied rhetoric in professional practice. While not appropriate for all purposes, an embodied rhetoric that draws attention to specific material conditions, lived experiences, positionalities, and/or standpoints can highlight difference instead of erasing it in favor of an assumed privileged discourse. Furthermore, a scholar employing an embodied rhetoric to illustrate self-reflexivity in terms of bodily or academic positionalities can open up a space for new professional practices and discourses, allowing others to shake off the straitjacket that Tompkins references at the end of her article.<sup>lviii</sup>

But, at least for many of us in composition and rhetoric, publishing in professional journals is only part of the work we do. What of our work in the classroom? And what of the work we ask of our students? My discussion thus far has focused on embodied rhetoric in what I have been calling professional contexts—primarily in scholarly journals. This focus is due in part to the focus of other scholars of embodied rhetoric, as most, too, limit their discussions to the writing that “we” (professional scholars) do with and for each other. What seems sorely lacking is attention to the space of the classroom: our practices as teachers and the practices we ask of our students. In the next section I begin to address this gap by discussing my own attempts to construct an embodied pedagogy, to construct assignments that allow students to practice embodied rhetoric, and to work with students as they—sometimes, as *we*—grapple with the possibilities and limitations of embodied rhetoric.



### **The Embodied Classroom**

Of course, at its most basic level, every classroom is embodied. Each classroom includes the teacher's body, the students', sometimes the bodies of parents and administrators. At the level of embodied language, we refer to a population of students as "the student body," who should learn a "body of knowledge." Classroom clocks have hands; books have spines. And classrooms are near bursting with embodied responses—the sinking feeling in one's gut when unprepared for an exam; the butterflies when the instructor is handing back papers; the sounds of sighing, shifting, coughing, chattering students who seem bored; the nervous shaking of an instructor's hands during the first week. Bodies, of course, are everywhere. And there is a marked attention to the bodies, particularly the students' bodies, in the lower grades, in part because children's bodies push themselves to the forefront in ways that adult bodies often resist. Kindergarten and elementary school children push and pull and hug, cry and shout, laugh loudly, wipe their noses on their sleeves, sometimes vomit, sometimes wet themselves. Some of this behavior starts to lessen in middle school, but then bodies begin to change and reassert themselves in different (and sometimes similar) ways. And again, by high school, bodies are still present, still making themselves known in fights and make-out sessions in the hallways, but this is seen as inappropriate behavior. By college, it seems that most bodily concerns are to be left outside of the classroom, excised in favor of the disembodied mind.

This gap is reflected in our scholarly writing as well. Most discussions of embodiment in academia focus on the professional writing done by scholars. Our students' bodies? Those are off-limits. To notice or write about our students' bodies

walks a fine line of appropriateness, so most of us steer far clear of such discussions. Instead, if we talk about bodies in the classroom they are our own bodies, the teacher's body. Or we talk about the student body as a conglomerate, breaking it into statistical representations of race, class, gender, sexuality, religious affiliation.

This is not to say that teacher-scholars in composition and rhetoric have completely ignored the body or ignored the bodies of their students. There are a number of examples of articles that reference or specifically discuss bodies in the classroom, including Ann Ardis' "Presence of Mind, Presence of Body," Lynn Bloom's "Teaching College English as a Woman," Mary Elliott's "Coming Out in the Classroom," bell hooks' *Teaching To Transgress*, Cheryl Johnson's "Participatory Rhetoric and the Teacher as Racial/Gendered Subject," and Shirley Wilson Logan's "When and Where I Enter." Most of these texts deal with students' reactions to the teacher's body or teachers' reactions to or engagement with students, particularly when one or both of the bodies involved is read as "other," whether in terms of race, class, gender, ability, size, sexuality, or religion.

In one of the few book-length discussions of the effects of bodies on the classroom space, contributors to *The Teacher's Body* discuss the impact their own bodies—female, pregnant, blind, white, nonwhite, queer, dwarf, diseased, disabled bodies—had on their teaching, their students, even their classroom space. Their focus on not "body" or "bodies" but *their* bodies makes concrete many of the sometimes abstract concepts about which I have been writing. For example, in her essay "Johnny Mnemonic Meets the Bimbo," Diane Price Herndl advocates a recognition of shifting subjectivities and performance, not only in students but in ourselves. She reminds teachers that we

often act as if we are unified subjects-who-know, but ask that students recognize their social constructedness. Price Herndl laments that “there are problems of teaching postmodern and poststructural ideas of the ‘self’ when *performing* a unified self” (64, emphasis in original). This seems a point well-taken, but more interesting to me is Price Herndl’s postscript, “The Bimbo on Chemo.”

Two days before she is to present a paper on this very essay, Price Herndl is diagnosed with breast cancer. Her (then) university did not have a faculty sick leave policy so, while enduring chemotherapy, she must teach her graduate theory class. This time, she points out, “the bimbo professor is on drugs (Adriamycin, Cytosan, methotrexate, fluorouracil, Zofran, Ativan, and Trazadone, plus some steroids), is bald, has gained sixteen pounds, and still has very little short-term memory” (65). Chemo makes her brain “foggy,” so students see her “struggling to maintain a thought some weeks and functioning normally others” (66). The mind and body, she explains, are so clearly connected when one is going through chemo. The mind, we are reminded, *is* body.

Price Herndl looks back at her original essay and concludes that being a cancer patient “challenged an idea of any performance of professor (or student for that matter) as precisely a performance” (67). While Price Herndl decides to perform her cancer treatment in a particular way (revealing it to her students, for example), we cannot—certainly she could not—imagine it *simply* as performance. While there may be certain social norms that she chose to enact or not enact (wearing a wig, for example), the fact of the cancer ravaging her body was not an act, was not intellectual, was physical, was embodied in a terrifying way. And that was the body that entered the classroom, the body

that taught. The classroom is a text, the teacher is a text, but, as we think about Price Herndl, the teacher and the teacher's body are not *solely* text. They bleed.

What stories like Price Herndl's illustrate is that the presence of the body, in this case the physical presence of the teacher's body in the classroom space, influences how that space, how that class, operates. As Freedman and Stoddard Holmes note, this is especially true (although certainly not only true) when students see the teacher's body as "other" in some way: "When students think the teacher's body is clearly marked by ethnicity, race, disability, size, gender, sexuality, illness, age, pregnancy, class, linguistic and geographic origins, or some combination of these, both the mode and the content of education can change" ("Introduction" 7). Students react to teachers' bodies in the classroom, sometimes seeing their embodiments as markers of authority (as is often the case with older male teachers), and sometimes as markers of lack of authority (as when white teachers teach texts by nonwhite authors). And teachers' bodies can influence how they approach the classroom as well. Young female teachers may need to perform authority in different ways than older male teachers.

In this way, all pedagogies are embodied, whether we recognize that embodiment or not. But I believe that we, as instructors, can draw on the work of scholars such as Banks and Hindman and use our bodies to disrupt or denaturalize the assumption of mastery often associated with the position of teacher. Furthermore, an attention to bodies foregrounds difference and can provide a framework for students and instructors to talk about such difference—race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, able-bodiedness, size—in the classroom. But it also lets us talk more specifically about issues like stem cell research, capital punishment, adoption, drinking laws, most any topic where opinions

differ because such opinions are, at base, embodied knowledge. I want to first say, however, that such an approach is tricky, to say the least. There are aspects of the body that can be hidden (sexuality), and those that cannot, or cannot as easily (race and gender). And there are dangers in revealing too much to our students, ways in which we can cross lines of propriety, safety, and comfort. But this, I would argue, is also true when we pay no attention to the body, imagining that all of our students share the same experience and will react as we expect. Like any pedagogical practice, an embodied approach requires careful thought and consideration.

### **Notes Toward an Embodied Pedagogy**

As I have tried to illustrate throughout this chapter, an embodied rhetoric pays attention to lived experiences, material realities, and bodily responses. A rhetor practicing embodied rhetoric works toward disrupting mastery and universality by exploring the ways in which these experiences, realities, and responses contribute to meaning-making. Finally, such an approach highlights, rather than glosses over, difference. What might it mean, then, to build a pedagogical approach based in embodied rhetoric?

I believe that such an approach must take into consideration not only the teacher's body, but the students' bodies (including lived experiences, social positionalities, and standpoints). In doing so, such a pedagogical approach would complicate traditional notions of teacherly authority—something feminist teachers have been attempting to do for years. To point out the process of making meaning through the body can illustrate for students the situatedness of knowledge. Instead of imagining that the teacher *is* the authority, as if authority is something we have, students may begin to see the teacher as,

at times, claiming or performing authority, and, at other times, not doing so. Students then would also be given a glimpse of the [wo]man behind the curtain, as it were, witnessing the instructor working through ideas and moving in tentative steps toward new knowledge.

In drawing attention to lived bodily experience, a pedagogy based in embodied rhetoric brings a particularity and specificity to all texts, including the classroom as text. It illustrates that meaning is not something that is out there, but something that is made in the individual and in social contexts. This, of course, is not to say that meaning is *solely* individual, but that the individual in society is constantly constructing meaning from norms and expectations swirling around gender, class, race, sexuality, religion, able-bodiedness, size. Individuals within a social context are constantly processing messages from family, peers, media, instructors, the workplace. The list, of course, could go on.

In other words, meanings are not only in “subject matter” but in bodily experience as well. To assume that the meaning is in the subject matter is to assume that meanings are transparent and idealized, there to be found. Through an embodied pedagogy an instructor would pay attention to students, teachers, and authors as embodied—as people in bodies—thereby challenging that assumption. Madeline Grumet explains it this way:

If my life experience diverges from that of my students or that of the cultural norm . . . and I acknowledge my own “take,” my students are challenged in two ways: They are provoked to acknowledge their own difference from the norm, and they are invited to entertain and acknowledge the possibility that they may indeed be like me, someone whom they had assumed was different from them. (254)

In this way “cultural norms and assumptions . . . [can] be identified, investigated, challenged, and changed” (253). Further, if we claim, interpret, voice, and embody our subjectivities, “we cannot continue to gather together in classrooms behaving as if each of us is there alone” (Grumet 255).

As teachers, if we ask students to recognize how their own bodies—written as they are by race, gender, cultural affiliation, height, weight, degree of able-bodiedness, sexuality—and the experiences of those bodies shape their “take” on texts, we, too, must be willing to admit and explore the ways in which our bodies also shape our opinions, approaches, our takes on texts. In this way teachers can move away from banking knowledge, and students and teachers can work toward producing knowledge from different bodies, different experiences.

Finally, because embodied rhetoric draws from embodied response and emotion, an embodied pedagogy must make room for such responses. Perhaps more than any other aspect of an embodied pedagogy, the role of emotion might make instructors nervous. It certainly makes me nervous. Emotion is messy, hard to control, and, at times, distracting. But I think that we have to pay attention to feminist critiques of Rogerian rhetoric that point out how limiting it feels for students, particularly female students, to attempt to remove emotion from their writing.<sup>lix</sup> When dealing with charged topics (and while some topics are clearly “hotter” than others, as an instructor I am constantly amazed at how often students and I unexpectedly stumble into emotionally-charged discussions), it seems artificial and even potentially cruel to ask students, or instructors, to avoid emotional responses. An instructor attempting to practice an embodied pedagogy would

provide space for emotional responses, not only in classroom discussions, but in student writing as well.<sup>lx</sup>

An embodied pedagogy, then, would do at least three things:

- When appropriate, draw attention to the embodied responses, physical and emotional, of both teacher and student in order to examine how those responses contribute to practices of meaning-making
- When appropriate, mine lived experience (education, history, family, social positionalities, etc.) in order to better understand embodied responses to texts—and ask students to do the same
- When appropriate, draw attention to both the power and limits of such situated knowledge by putting different experiences, claims, subjectivities, positionalities, stories, etc into conversation with each other

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I hope to show my attempts to implement an embodied pedagogy in my sophomore-level persuasive writing course. I want, first, to note that an embodied pedagogy is only one aspect of my overall approach to teaching this course. As you have seen throughout this project, I have tried to practice a feminist pedagogy, incorporating aspects of an invitational pedagogy, a pedagogy of rhetorical listening, and now an embodied pedagogy when appropriate. That last phrase, “when appropriate,” is crucial in any teaching situation. No pedagogical approach can account for all situations. Therefore, as an instructor I try to remain pedagogically flexible, drawing from a number of strategies and backgrounds. An embodied pedagogy is one of those pedagogical strategies.



I attempted to utilize an embodied pedagogy in a number of ways. First, I introduced my students to embodied rhetoric (in three semesters, none of my students had heard of embodied rhetoric before my class). As a class, we explored definitions and uses of embodied rhetoric and I revealed my own questions about such an approach to my students (so that I was not always the only source of knowledge in the classroom). As an instructor, I took pains to draw attention to my own body as a source of knowledge and discussed with my students the limits and benefits of paying attention to embodied responses and embodied rhetoric, both in the academy and in the larger civic realm. Finally, I designed assignments that encouraged students to explore the connections between their own embodied responses, their lived experiences and material circumstances, and the ways in which they make knowledge. Unfortunately, I do not have the space nor time to recognize the range of student writing and responses garnered in three semesters. I hope, however, that the samples I have provided here do some justice to the complex nature of my students' work in this area.

### **Common Confusion**

Before I talk more specifically about what embodied student writing might look like, I want to discuss two common misperceptions my students had—in all three sections of the course—about embodied rhetoric. First I should note that if different students in three consecutive semesters struggled in similar ways with the concept of embodied rhetoric and embodied writing, there is obviously more work that I, as instructor, need to do to minimize this confusion. As you will see throughout the remainder of this chapter, my attempts to incorporate an embodied pedagogy, as well as my attempts to use and

discuss embodied rhetoric with my students, are far from perfect. Such work is, of course, always in progress.

Let me begin by discussing the ways in which I introduced students to embodied rhetoric and how I attempted to explain, at least in the preliminary stages of our study, what embodied rhetoric is and how we might be using it in the class. First, students read Will Banks' article, "Written Through the Body," which I have referenced a number of times throughout this chapter. A relatively clear and accessible text, in this article Banks not only defines embodied rhetoric (as he is using that term), but also attempts to practice it. Students are often put off by Banks, in part because they're not sure what to do with a scholarly article in which the author incorporates stories of his parents' divorce (for example). Many are also taken aback by Banks' confession of attraction for one of his students—one of his male students, to be more precise. And, because most of my students are not yet accustomed to reading theory, they're often somewhat confused by this article (although they find it more accessible than Foss and Griffin's article on invitational rhetoric).

As a class we spend at least one full class period (80 minutes), talking our way through Banks' article, raising questions, working through points, and trying to get a sense of what he means by "embodied rhetoric" and why he believes it is important. It's not an easy conversation to maintain for almost an hour and a half, but my students have been relatively willing to engage these concepts. But, just as my attempts to practice an embodied pedagogy are always in progress, my students' understanding of embodied rhetoric was also a work in progress. Each semester, we seemed to hit two roadblocks. The first was that embodied rhetoric was little more than a revelation of emotion and, as

such, could not be critiqued or engaged in a serious way. The other, and this was both more prevalent and more problematic, was that embodied rhetoric was the same as personal writing or the inclusion of personal stories.

As I noted in the section on embodied response, embodied rhetoric is closely linked to emotion—emotion tends to spark physical responses and it is therefore difficult to write in an embodied way without drawing from emotional response. Yet many students in my course imagined embodied rhetoric to be *only* about emotion, as we can see from a number of their responses to the end of the term survey (which can be found in the appendix at the end of this project) as well as their online discussion board posts.

As part of their exploration of embodied rhetoric, I asked students to write a response to this prompt: “What is embodied rhetoric? Is there a difference between pathos, as we have traditionally understood it, and embodied rhetoric? If so, what? If not, why the new term? What are the benefits and drawbacks that you see in using embodied rhetoric or embodied response?” Referring to Banks’ discussion of his parents’ divorce, one student believed that using embodied rhetoric must be “scary” because “once it is typed and done, there is tangible proof that this is how you feel because of this extremely private incident that happened.” Another student noted that “embodied writing can affect the reader's emotions by being thrust into the writer's [emotion].” Yet another: “Embodied rhetoric is passionate writing that comes from every emotion, thought, and feeling. It is about saying how you feel without restrictions.” I see in these responses, and in the others that echo these sentiments, more than a linking of embodied rhetoric with emotion, but an understanding of embodied rhetoric *as* emotion. After reading Banks’

article and discussing it in class, many students seemed to believe that using embodied rhetoric meant simply including more of your own emotional responses in your writing.

Most embodied writing as I have been discussing it here does include or at least reflect emotion, but to equate embodied rhetoric *only* with emotion minimizes, perhaps even erases, the potential for emotion and bodies as sources of knowledge. If students imagine embodied rhetoric to be the inclusion of emotion, they need not mine such emotion or lived experiences—such embodiments—for what these responses *do*. The potential of embodied rhetoric is a recognition of a source of knowledge, an acknowledgment that meaning comes from somewhere, and that the body as a source of meaning can help us better understand differences in opinions, values, interpretations, experiences. When students imagine that embodied rhetoric is only a revelation of emotion, they relegate it to the realm of the private, reducing the social aspect of such a rhetorical approach. Further, such confusion can serve to reify the mind/body split by separating emotion from meaning-making.

Perhaps more troubling is some students' belief that such an inclusion gets at the "truth" of personal experience. One student explains embodied rhetoric by stating that the inclusion of emotion helps a writer "convey the very truth of your own life." Another writes that because we're dealing with the author's emotions, we "know it's really true." Laura Micciche found that her students, too, often equate emotion with the "real truth." Convinced that their emotions represented something "pure, honest, and true," Micciche's students argued that their emotional responses, unlike their analytical discussions, were simply natural and "unfiltered" (67). Micciche tries to remind her students that both reason and emotion are mediated by language, and that emotion itself

references “a history, a social context, and a set of experiences” that help to construct appropriate (and inappropriate) emotional responses. For Micciche, emotions are not simply something we *have*, they are something we *do*, something we perform.<sup>lxi</sup>

The second misconception about embodied rhetoric was more pronounced than some students’ insistence that embodied rhetoric was little more than including “real” emotion in writing. For many students, embodied rhetoric seemed solely to mean including personal experience, blurring the line between personal writing and embodied rhetoric. This confusion is understandable, especially since the inclusion of personal experience in Will Banks’ scholarly article seemed so strange to my students. Again, students’ online discussion board posts revealed their uncertainty about the difference between personal writing and embodied rhetoric—in fact, many students saw no difference at all. One student quite clearly states “this embodied writing style is the same as creative non-fiction or personal writing.” Another explains her belief that “it [embodied rhetoric] is more of a story telling mechanism rather than a persuasive writing piece because your [sic] just talking about your experience.”

The equation of embodied rhetoric with personal experience, or with personal writing as most of my students understand that term, was rampant in each of the three semesters.<sup>lxii</sup> And there is good reason for students’ confusion. For one, there is considerable overlap between embodied rhetoric and personal writing, particularly given the myriad ways in which many authors use the term “personal writing.” The term can reference memoir, creative nonfiction, narrative, experiential writing, vignettes, even forms of participatory journalism.<sup>lxiii</sup> And Candace Spigelman’s definition of personal writing comes close to my definition of embodied rhetoric. Spigelman, author of

*Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*, says that personal writing refers “to the ways in which writers make sense of their lives by organizing their experience into first-person stories,” (3). She clarifies by saying that “in the kind of personal writing I have in mind, the telling is *purposeful* and intended to do more than express an opinion or cathartically confess” (6, emphasis in original). Finally, Spigelman quotes Alan France to argue that the kind of personal writing she values is an attempt “to translate public knowledge into personal meaning—and back again” (qtd. in Spigelman 6). France’s dictum sounds strikingly like Banks when Banks says that he can “use the ‘personal’ to make sense of the world, as well as the other way around” (23). Here Banks even uses the term “personal” to refer to embodied rhetoric.

On the one hand, this overlap is inevitable, in part because as many scholars have argued, all writing is in some ways personal. Diane Freedman argues that, “much if not all scholarship, student work, and real-world writing is personal” (“Life Work” 205). Donald Murray explains that regardless of the genre, “poetry, fiction, academic article, essay, newspaper column, newsletter, textbook, juvenile nonfiction” even “ghost writ[ing] for corporate and government leaders . . . all my writing—and yours—is autobiographical” (“All Writing” 66). And both Richard E. Miller and Cheryl Glenn, among others, draw attention to the autobiographical—therefore personal—aspects of all writing. So embodied rhetoric is personal, in part because all writing is, in some ways, personal. Therefore it can be difficult to discern the difference between personal writing and embodied rhetoric, but perhaps helpful if we imagine it this way: embodied rhetoric is always in some ways personal, but not all personal writing is embodied.

Certainly to use these terms—"personal" and "embodied"—as if they stood for unitary or singular concepts is problematic, but I think it is safe to say that writing can be personal without drawing specific attention to the body. In some ways all writing is embodied, because all writing must, of course, come from somewhere, someone, somebody (and therefore some body), but embodied rhetoric and writing calls for a specific recognition of that body. Not all personal writing enacts this. I can write my autobiography *as if* my body has little to do with what I'm writing, what I've experienced. I can write it *as if* it were a master narrative of sorts—a coming of age tale, a bootstraps tale, a story of romance—and I can act as if that story is universal.

But it's not.

I'm a white woman who grew up below the poverty line in rural northern Wisconsin. I'm married, I've been heavy most of my adolescent and adult life, and I had back surgery in the last six months, which hinders my physical activity. All of these things could mark my personal writing as embodied, if I examined the ways in which such locators shape the way I view the world, the way the world views me, and the knowledge that I both make and disseminate as a writer. If not, then this is just (pretty bad) personal writing, and, to be honest, it's not doing much work for me.

Let me take a moment to clarify what, for me, is the difference between personal writing and embodied rhetoric, as I am using those terms. All writing is personal, so embodied rhetoric is personal. But personal writing can take many different forms (one of which is embodied rhetoric). Embodied rhetoric is a particular form of personal writing in which the writer gestures to the lived experiences and material circumstances of living in his or her particular body *and* uses these experiences to explore how he or she constructs

knowledge. Such an approach works to disrupt the assumed mastery of the rhetor, as well as to complicate what can sometimes seem like a universal experience or discourse. Not all personal writing works toward these goals.

To imagine that embodied rhetoric is the same as personal writing or is “only” personal writing, as my students often do, then (again) risks minimizing the ways in which embodied rhetoric can draw attention to the situatedness of knowledge. When students imagine that embodied rhetoric is the same as personal writing, as they understand it, they tend to simply drop personal stories into their essays, not connecting these experiences back to a larger attempt to construct social meaning. The inclusion of their lived experiences becomes an ingredient to include, a step to check off, but not a method for exploring sources of knowledge.

### **An Attempt to Model Embodied Rhetoric in the Classroom**

Given the slippage between personal writing and embodied rhetoric, how do I (try to) help my students better understand the differences? First, by discussing those differences with students. Next, by way of illustration, allowing my students to actually see their instructor (me) working through the use of embodied rhetoric. Here’s one story I tell my students in order to model embodied rhetoric:

UNH has a convenient shuttle system that I often use when the weather is bad. One day I was the third in a line of four people waiting to get onto a very full shuttle. When I boarded, there was only one seat left (and one more person behind me). So I made my way to the open space at the back of the bus and stood, allowing the person behind me to take the final open seat. As we were about to depart, the young man in front



of me turned around and offered me his seat. “Nope, I’m good,” I told him, “but thank you. That’s really kind.” And we were off on the short trip to Thompson Hall.

I tell this story to my students when we start talking about embodied rhetoric and the differences bodies can make in meaning-making. This young man was incredibly generous, offering to give up his seat to me. I imagine whoever raised him would be proud of him in that moment. And they should be. It was a polite gesture and, I think, a sincere one. It is one of those moments where I have hope for the future, if young men like this are in it.

Except . . .

I start to wonder *why* he offered me his seat. Yes, it’s polite, but *why* is that considered polite? I tell my students—and this is true—that in that short ride to T-Hall, I started to wonder about his motives. Did he offer me his seat because I’m a woman? Would he have made the same offer if I were a man? Is it because he thinks I’m his elder (I am, but not by *that* much and boy does that ever make me NOT feel better)? Because he thinks I’m *pregnant*? And this is the part where my students start to get a little uncomfortable because now, *now* we’re talking very specifically about my body and the fact that my body is a heavy one. Most of the young women in my classes at UNH (not all, to be sure, but most) are thin and/or athletic. I do not look like them. It’s not impossible, particularly given one of the baby doll shirts I like, that this young man thought I could be pregnant.

No, no, no, my students assure me, he was just being polite. You offer your seat to a woman.

Ah, right, to a woman. I know this. I've heard about this rule. But why is that, I ask? Why is it polite? What does it assume about women? Who do we give our seats to? Women who are pregnant, the elderly, the infirm. People who probably need to sit down. Do I need to sit down? Simply because I'm female? I am not as capable of standing under my own power?

Now I'm over-reacting, according to my students. This poor guy was just trying to be nice, trying to do the right thing, and look what I'm doing to that gesture. I'm over-thinking this. Over-analyzing. Over-something. Just let it *be*, they tell me.

But of course I can't, I remind them. I can't in part because it's who I am. It's the way I've been trained to think. I analyze. It's what I do. But I also can't, I remind them, because it's *who I am*. In this particular body, in a heavy female body that's hovering around thirty years old, I process this gesture differently than I did when I was younger, and when I was thinner. The body I'm in, I tell them, often pushes me to read this situation differently.

In moments like these, I am trying to do a number of things. First, I am trying to draw my students' attention to the fact that I, as teacher, think through things. Knowledge doesn't get handed to me in some sort of teacher's edition. I process information, grapple with it, turn it inside and out, trying to make sense of my world and my embodied responses. In this way I remind them that I am not the distributor of knowledge packets. Knowledge is created, tested, refuted, recreated, and used for different purposes. It's active.

I also try to draw my students' attention to the fact that I have a body, a body that is in some ways different from their own, *and that I make knowledge in part through that*

*body*. My response to this young man has almost everything to do with my own insecurities about this body in this culture: female, overweight, aging. Their responses to this situation may be similar or they may be drastically different and part of what informs those responses, I argue, is the body that each of them inhabits. Young women, I ask, if this had happened to you, when this has happened to you, do you wonder if he thinks you're old? No. Pregnant? Not usually. Do you wonder if he's hitting on you? Often. I don't. He's probably not hitting on me. Not me, not in this body.

Young men: has anybody done this for you? No. Would you do this for another guy? No. Would you do this for a woman? Generally, yes.

Tell me, then, that the body doesn't matter. That our reactions to it and our responses in it don't inform our thoughts and actions.

My hope is that moments like this one illustrate for students in very concrete ways the fact that my experience in this world may be different than their experiences in this world, based in part on the fact that we live in very different bodies. My relationship to space—the way I move in the world—is probably different than many of theirs, in part because of my size (both height and weight)<sup>lxiv</sup>. I hope that it reminds them, too, that my thinking comes from somewhere. The way I think through that moment on the bus is, in part, because of the body I inhabit. Of course part of that thinking comes from social constructs, from education, from past experiences, but I echo Banks when I say that I make sense of these things through my body, and I read my body through these texts as well.

Finally, I hope moments like these illustrate for students that my responses, my thoughts, and my experiences are not the only possible interpretations. In this particular

story, there are a number of alternative and equally valid readings based on different bodies and experiences. This young man was, I believe, trying to be polite. He was not attempting to enact some sort of performance of masculine superiority. Yet it can be read that way. And it can be read as polite. At the same time. And *his* reading of this moment would probably differ markedly from my own, which does not make either of us wrong. My own experience is my own experience and gives rise to my own reading.

Ah, there's the rub. There's the moment that makes so many of us nervous. As I write that final sentence of the previous paragraph, my stomach sinks a little because I hear my students saying, "But that's just my interpretation. How can you say my interpretation is wrong?" I hear them saying, "Well, everyone is entitled to their own opinion." And I hear my colleagues asking if this just pushes us into the realm of relativism. All of these voices make me nervous.

And I think with good reason. Embodied rhetoric pushed too far can venture into the realm of relativism, where one stance is as valid as another. It can slide into pure subjectivity and an inability to evaluate and, potentially, can lead to an inability to act (for if any one claim is as valid as the next, what might one act *against* and with whom might one join in action?). Yet the same could be said for an inattention to the body, which has led us toward the assumption that any body can stand in for any other body, thereby erasing difference and perpetuating the belief that the mythic norm of white heterosexual masculinity is the universal experience. As always, I steer toward the middle ground.

To hearken back to the previous chapter, Ratcliffe's notion of rhetorical listening aids me in this endeavor. When my students and I attempt to put embodied experiences

and responses next to each other, I ask that they think about how these experiences speak to each other, moving in a recursive way back to the bodies that speak. In short, I ask that students listen for how our embodied experiences intersect, overlap, contradict, support, and engage with other embodied experiences. Then, as a class, we discuss what such relationships might mean and what it might mean to hold people accountable for claims made from embodied places. There are a number of ways I attempt to do this throughout the semester, and, most specifically, when students and I are learning about embodied rhetoric. One of those ways is through stories like the one I just told—stories in which I try to illustrate how my own embodied responses contribute to my attempts to make meaning, and how I not only include personal experience and those embodied responses, but include a discussion of *how* those factors shape my analysis of that moment.

I ask students to use embodied rhetoric as a source of meaning making in our daily classroom discussions, particularly when I (or they) sense that lived experience or positionality is a contributing factor to confusion over a concept or disagreement over an issue. For the sake of brevity, I want to focus instead on the ways in which I ask students to use embodied rhetoric in their reading and writing practices. The assignments I detail in the next section ask that students pay attention to how authors may be using embodied rhetoric, and how their (the students') embodied responses and social positionalities influence their readings of such pieces. It also asks that students attempt to practice embodied rhetoric in their own writing, including this information in an attempt to illustrate how their bodies contribute to their creation of knowledge.

## **Embodied Assignments and Student Writing**

After I feel that students have a sense of embodied language, embodied response, and embodied rhetoric, they read two selections from their textbook that, to me, either do or could be seen as using some form of embodied rhetoric. In the fall of the last year that I taught this course, students read “Saplings in the Storm,” an excerpt from psychologist and family therapist Mary Pipher’s best-selling book *Reviving Ophelia*; and “The Bully in the Mirror,” by science writer Stephen S. Hall.<sup>lxv</sup> In the spring, they read “Women Have More to Say on Everything,” by sportswriter and ESPN co-host Tony Kornheiser, and “I’m Sorry, I Won’t Apologize,” by linguist Deborah Tannen. They then write two rhetorical analyses of either of these pieces. The first is what I might call a more traditional rhetorical analysis, where students discuss rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos), audience, fallacies, claims, warrants, and backing. Next, they write what I call an “embodied rhetorical analysis,” in which I ask students to:

analyze the ways in which the author uses his or her own experiences, positionalities, and physicalities in order to persuade the audience (there’s a definite connection to both ethos and pathos here, so you’ll probably want to draw on those terms and ideas). You’ll include in your analysis why this particular approach was or was not effective for you as a reader *given your own particular experiences, histories, positionalities, etc.* So you’ll need not only to refer to the text, but refer to your own response to the text and then explain that response in terms of your own embodied experiences.

This assignment is not meant to privilege one sort of analysis over another. I am not trying to argue that an embodied rhetorical analysis is more effective than a traditional rhetorical analysis. I am not even sure what “more effective” would mean in this context. What I do want to argue, though, is that an embodied rhetorical analysis asks that readers pay particular attention to the source of their own reactions—their embodied responses—and that such an attention might encourage students (and instructors) to think about difference in that moment. As one student in a spring semester put it, “This article is persuasive, especially if you have had similar experiences to his. However, if you have never seen these types of examples in your own life I think it would be tough to be swayed by this article.” What this student, I’ll call her Leah, notices is both the importance and the limits of embodied rhetoric.

Writing in response to Kornheiser’s argument that women and men communicate differently, and that women are more likely to be proficient in language and men in math and numbers, Leah discussed her own experiences as a young woman who excels at math, but has never been particularly good at English. Leah tries to understand Kornheiser’s argument and, although she disagrees with his claim, admits that “nearly all of my [female] friends from high school were in fact terrible at math, and much better at English, and they talked way more than some of my guy friends.” Yet Leah points out that there may be just as many counter-examples in which women do well in math and men in English. Ultimately, Leah does not find Kornheiser persuasive, explaining, “I found it hard for me to agree completely with what Kornheiser was trying to say in his piece. There are always exceptions to any opinion and I found his article to be interesting, but not persuading [*sic*].”

In this way, Leah points out that her own experiences as a woman contradict Kornheiser's claim so that, while she can understand his point, she has a hard time agreeing with him. A male student, Connor, concurs:

The male to female comparison that Kornheiser makes is simply vague and untrue. Sure, there are guys that are great at math and women who are outstanding in English, but I wouldn't say that is the social norm. Growing up I was always an English student. I hated reading, but I was good at it, and I absolutely loved writing. I wrote about everything. I would even write when it wasn't required. On the other hand, math was my absolute low point. I just never understood why numbers were important. I would have much rather expressed myself and explored the world through writing then [*sic*] putting a bunch of numbers together. I always liked that fact that there was no right or wrong way to write about things.

Connor concludes his analysis by arguing that, "A claim like this [that women have more to say about everything] is simply improvable [*sic*] because of the amount of people in this world. [. . .] This is why ultimately this argument can't work."

Again, I see Leah and Connor both working toward a number of different points concerning not only Kornheiser's argument, but embodied rhetoric in general. First, both students voice their belief that because Kornheiser's main claim (that women talk more than men and that women are better at verbal skills and men at numbers) has not been true for them then the claim is not persuasive. In more traditional terms, these students draw attention to Kornheiser's lack of qualifiers, but they also point out the limits of



personal experience. Kornheiser has had one experience with men and women; these students have had another. Therefore they imagine that Kornheiser is wrong and they, by default, are right. These students imagine themselves to be “right” because their claims are those of relativism. Both students, and many others in the class, found fault with Kornheiser’s argument because he is making an over-generalization and using faulty assumptions. One can’t make such sweeping claims, even if the author is being tongue-in-cheek, because, as these students note, everybody’s experiences are different.

While many instructors might find this line of reasoning problematic, leading us down that vague path of relativism, I see such claims as a way to talk more about embodied response and embodied rhetoric. In our subsequent discussions, we talked about students’ embodied responses to these pieces, responses like Leah’s and Connor’s. Some students were offended by the authors (Kornheiser and Tannen, especially), some were in total agreement, and some didn’t really seem to care. And when I asked students to think about their own embodied responses, they began telling their own personal experiences, matching one supporting experience with one that contradicts a claim.

But then I asked students to freewrite for a few moments, imagining other situations where their experiences and embodied responses made it easier or more difficult for them to really *hear* a claim or another’s experience. Instead of imagining how they might *refute* a claim, as they were doing with Kornheiser and Tannen, I asked that they think about moments in their lives where their own embodiments might have impacted the moment. Were there moments when they reacted in particular ways because of who they are, the bodies they live in, the experiences that they’ve had? Why, I asked them, might it be important for us to consider the source of our responses?

In the discussion that followed, students talked about feeling insignificant in their bodies, feeling silenced and afraid, feeling powerful, feeling uncertain, feeling angry (at both themselves and at others), pressured, proud, and excited. Students also talked about feeling confirmed, particularly when they read something that spoke to their experiences and evoked reactions in them, reactions that they sometimes couldn't quite explain. "Okay," I said, "now what do we do with that information? We've been talking about gender for a few weeks and next we're talking about race. We're in a room full of white people. How might this relate?"

Our discussion touched not only on personal experience, but also about where our own embodied responses come from, how these responses might help us in understanding an issue, and how these responses can hinder us from understanding alternative points of view. As one student put it, "There are several times in my life when I have judged someone for doing certain things. . . . Then I had the unfortunate opportunity to be standing in their shoes, and it makes a lot more sense. It is good to understand the type of life a person has had to understand their beliefs." Such moments allowed students and I to talk about the "truth" of experience, the ways in which what they believed to be true based in their own experience can shift when their experiences change, and when their social positionalities change. One student, for example, talked about growing up wealthy, wishing that "poor people would just work harder and get a job." Such people—very much a "them" in this young man's experience—were simply lazy, stupid, or both.

And then his father lost his job. Having worked his way up the ladder in a successful local company, his father had only a high school diploma and job skills that were quickly becoming irrelevant in a new technologically advanced workplace. His

mother, who had never had to work before, also had a high school diploma. Everything in this young man's life shifted. His parents sold the house and boat, sold off stocks, and, within a few years, were running out of money: money for rent, money for clothes, money for their now one car, and money for this young man's tuition. His parents, he told me, were neither stupid nor lazy. In a persuasive piece on welfare, Christopher writes (and this is reproduced as-is):

I used to walk by them [homeless people in Boston] and think "Get a job!" Sometimes I would even say it to them. I didn't understand them because I wasn't poor like them and hadn't been there where they are. My family was doing ok, better then ok, so I didn't really have to think about them. But now [since his father lost his job] I do. Were not homeless, but I know were closer then we use to be. We could be those people on the street. Even more we could be the people on welfare that I use to hate. I don't hate them now. I understand how hard life can be and when you need a little help, just a little because we might need it soon.

In this section, and in other parts of his draft, Christopher draws attention not only to his situation, but how that new lived experience helps him make meaning of homelessness, poverty, and welfare in a way that he could not do when his family was wealthy. Christopher not only presents his personal experience by telling his story (which he also does), but he uses that story to show his change in perspective. In doing so, he complicates the universality of experience, noting not only the distance between the homeless people on the streets of Boston and his former self, but the distance between that former self and his present self.

In a more overt way, Isaac also chose to include aspects of embodied rhetoric in his persuasive piece. When I asked him in conference about his topic and approach, he said that he wanted to write about stem cell research and thought he would “have to” use embodied rhetoric, at least in places, because he is diabetic and his grandfather, who helped raise him, was in the advanced stages of Alzheimer’s. Isaac explained that he didn’t know how he could write about this topic and not reference his body and his experiences.

A burgeoning young writer, Isaac’s final draft includes these three sections:

When I prick my finger again I wonder why anyone would oppose stem cell research. If there was a way that someone could have cured me and made it so I didn’t have to cry while my mom checked my blood sugar, wouldn’t they? I can’t imagine someone standing there watching as children try to be strong and not do something. That’s what it feels like to me when people oppose stem cell research. It feels like they’re doing nothing when we could be doing something.

My grandfather taught me how to ride a bike and sit with my elbows off the table. Now he isn’t sure who I am. Sometimes he thinks I’m my father or his brother. Sometimes when I would visit him he wouldn’t know who I was so he’d be scared of me. In some ways its [sic] better now because he doesn’t really know much of anything. He’s still scared of me sometimes, but mostly he just watches t.v. I’m not sure what he knows anymore but he doesn’t know me.

I know that my life expectancy is shorter because of my diabetes and that I have to be careful about what I eat and do. I have to watch out for cuts on my feet. To me, stem cell research seems like a Godsend. It might not cure me, but it might cure younger kids and it might not cure my grandpa, but it might prevent it from happening to other people's grandparents. It's hard for me to understand the other side of this issue when my fingers hurt but I've been trying. I know that people think that a fetus is a baby and that stem cell research means that we're going to abort babies to help adults. If that's what they believe I can't blame them for not wanting to support stem cell research. I try to think about couples who long for children and can't have them and what a waste it must sound like, but they're wrong because that's not what's going to happen in stem cell research. I wonder sometimes if they think about people like me?

Isaac's story, even now, is heartbreaking. And at twenty years old, I can see the writer that this soft-spoken young man might become. To know what he struggles with not only helps his readers understand the stakes of this debate and why he holds the position he does, but it helps Isaac understand the roots of his own position. Furthermore, Isaac makes an effort to "try to think" about people who oppose stem cell research, particularly those who he identifies as misinformed, but, it seems, potentially well-meaning. He tries to imagine their lived experiences, the couples who "long for children and can't have them," drawing attention here not only to his own body, but the ache (longing) of the bodies of others. And from this he tells readers that such people, "aren't bad people,"

they just “don’t know what it’s like to live with diabetes or Alzheimer’s. I hope they never have to.”

Later Isaac tries again to imagine the longing of infertile couples and wonders if stem cell research might help them conceive. In this way he connects the research he has done about the potentials of stem cell research with his own bodily experiences as well as what he imagines to be the embodied responses and experiences of others. He uses that information to attempt to make sense of this debate—a debate with a solution that seems so clear to him. By the end of his essay, Isaac says, “What seems like such a clear answer must be more difficult for people who aren’t like me.” This is, for Isaac, part of the reason the debate rages on: because we make sense of the world through our bodies—diabetic, sterile, aging bodies—and those bodies, too, are evidence to be considered.

Perhaps even more interesting is that Isaac often uses his own embodied responses and embodied rhetoric—as well as imagining the bodies of others—not *solely* as evidence to persuade. Certainly there is a strong element of persuasion in this draft, in part because Isaac feels strongly about this issue and in part because it is the assignment. But Isaac does not seem to be simply anticipating his opposition when he imagines the heartache of being unable to conceive. He seems also to be really trying to understand the difference of opinion, not just in order to use such knowledge for his own persuasive ends, but for the sake of understanding itself. In the context of an issue that is so personal to Isaac in so many ways, and so clear to him, he works to recognize how his own body makes “clear” this issue for him and how another body, a different body, might see this issue just as clearly, but from a very different perspective.

This is perhaps the greatest benefit of embodied rhetoric and an embodied pedagogy—both push instructor and student to imagine the bodies of others, and how all of our bodies help to create knowledge. Because we inhabit this world in different bodies, the meaning we make of the world might be different. Not necessarily wrong, or better, or clearer (although that is sometimes true), but different. Students and I start to acknowledge this when we talk about my experience on the bus, Leah and Connor begin to understand this in their embodied rhetorical analyses, the rest of the class explores this issue when we talk about their own embodied responses, and certainly Christopher and Isaac pull not only from their own embodiment, but attempt to imagine the bodies of others. Through moments like these, my students and I are reminded that experience is not universal, that knowledge is situated and shifting, and that understanding is not something we find out there, it's something we create.

## CHAPTER 5

### CODA: FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

It's a famous scene from a famous movie: A young Paul Newman (Luke) stands, slightly aloof despite his prison garb, next to an angry prison captain. Stands, that is, until The Captain hits him hard with a blackjack. Newman's character rolls down the ditch, lays there, propped up on his elbows, stunned. The Captain, realizing he has lost his temper in front of the men, let the convicts see that Luke has gotten to him, stammers and says, "What we've got here is failure to communicate. Some men you just can't reach."

Failure to communicate. Forty years later, this line still resonates. I imagine this is so because many of us often find ourselves in the midst of communication failures. Attempts to reach across differences that, for some reason, simply seem to fail. In the fictional prison world of *Cool Hand Luke*, a failure to communicate results in physical violence, like a beating from The Captain, or the silence and isolation that accompanies a night in the box (solitary confinement). We hope that in the real world there are more options, but because language is always wrapped up in issues of power, we, too, can find ourselves facing either silence or violence as a result of a failure to communicate.

In 1980, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson included an extensive discussion of the "argument as war metaphor" in their book *Metaphors We Live By*.<sup>lxvi</sup> Lakoff and Johnson explain that



we don't just *talk* about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. (4, emphasis in original)

The authors go on to say that “[i]t is not that arguments are a subspecies of war. Arguments and wars are different kinds of things—verbal discourse and armed conflict—and the actions performed are different kinds of actions. But ARGUMENT is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of WAR” (5, emphasis in original). Sally Miller Gearhart would likely disagree with Lakoff and Johnson, given her belief that persuasive metaphors and artillery attacks are different only in degree, not in kind. As I have previously argued, I am more likely to be swayed by Lakoff and Johnson’s description of the *metaphor* of argument as war than I am Gearhart’s belief that the two are not, in fact, different kinds of things. But lately? Well, there seems to be some slippage.

Lately I’m starting to see resonances between the scene in *Cool Hand Luke*, Lakoff and Johnson’s description of argument as war, and Gearhart’s concerns about violence and persuasion. I imagine that’s because lately it seems that argument itself can so quickly turn to physical violence, can slide so easily from language to artillery. A failure to communicate, as in the movie, so often leads to violent action. It’s hard not to wonder about our failures to communicate, particularly across difference, when images of

war—actual physical war—are constantly on our television screens. It's hard not to see a connection between language and physical violence when I check *msn.com* today and read about a U.S. soldier who had been using the Qur'an for target practice, scribbling obscenities in the book and then literally shooting at the Muslim word of God ("U.S. Soldier"). Difference, language, a lack of understanding, and physical violence all wrapped into one.<sup>lxvii</sup> It's also hard for me not to make a connection between a failure to communicate and a lack of understanding when my brother-in-law, a member of the United States Air Force, sends me "funny" emails about Iraqis, Muslims, atheists, and homosexuals. They're just jokes, he tells me. It's hard for me not to make a connection between a failure to communicate and physical violence when my friend comes back from Iraq and says he can't talk about it, but twice ends up in jail for assault and battery. "Why'd you hit that guy?" I ask. What they had, he tells me, was a failure to communicate.

I think back to the first class I taught after September 11<sup>th</sup>, an honors first-year writing course with only eight (very bright) students. I remember Callie asking, "Why do they hate us?" It's a question I think a lot of people asked then, still ask now. Why do they hate us? My friend Laura and her wife Emily must wonder that too, when their marriage is not only *not* recognized outside of Massachusetts, but is actively and publicly protested around the country. Why, they must wonder, do they hate us? The differences that separate us, marked at times by red and blue on a map of the U.S. The (mostly) spurious idea of quite literally splitting the country in two. A nation divided, again. That idea of us and them, us *versus* them. A lack of understanding. A failure to communicate.

I do not want to put too fine a point on this, nor do I want to imply that my project is an attempt to save the world. I am not that naïve. But I am inspired by Sonia Johnson when she says that “because I wanted a new world, I had no choice but to at least try to do something else—*anything* else. I knew from experience that taking such risks could jettison my mind out of its ruts and expose it to a vast range of new possibilities” (qtd in Foss, Foss, and Griffin *Feminist* 314). In some ways, this project has been an attempt to do something, *anything*, to open my own eyes and mind to new possibilities of argument, communication, understanding, and negotiating difference. Because I was trained in the fine art of persuasion. I love a good debate. And while I still find these skills valuable, I wonder if they are the only way or always the best way to get things done.

My three semesters teaching these theories in a persuasive writing course suggests to me that no, oppositional frameworks, debate, and traditional persuasion are not always the only way or the best way to get things done. In part, it depends on what these “things” are that need doing. If we are looking to better understand each other, better understand those things that separate us, and to begin to negotiate that chasm, then no, an oppositional framework is probably not the best way to get those things done.

But even in moments when we wish we could change another, wish we could change someone else’s viewpoint, it is possible that traditional argument may not always be the only way or the best way. I am thinking here of the moments Foss and Griffin describe—the protestors and the guards, Gearhart and the chemist. Change often comes in incremental steps, and even if these individuals did not change their viewpoints that day, they may pause to consider what it is they believe. And so may Gearhart.

I am thinking, too, of my brother-in-law, the one who keeps sending me what I feel are offensive “jokes.” I would like to change his views on homosexuality, atheists, Muslims. But when I have attempted to engage him as I have been taught—to use what seem to me to be rational arguments in a traditional debate format—we have ended up hollering at each other over pasta at Bertucci’s. What begins as a calm discussion often ends in shouting and then uncomfortable silence. In that silence it’s clear that neither of us has changed our views. In fact, my guess is he’s even more certain of his case, evidenced in part by his decision to keep sending me these emails, even though I have asked him not to. And I leave those “conversations” as certain as ever that I’m right and he’s wrong. Nothing has changed.

Here’s what I would like to do now. I would like to try something different with him, to take a moment to try to understand him better, to understand the reasons he feels the way he does. I would like to try to listen not only for his claims but also for his cultural logics, the values and assumptions that allow his claims to function for him. I would like to hear the sources of his knowledge, not just the reasons. I would like to do this not simply to find the flaw in his logic, and not to stockpile weapons against him. Because I think, have always thought, that he has a good heart. And I wonder why he is filled with such hatred. Why he seems so angry at everyone and everything that is not like him. And I would like to tell him my stories, tell him about my uncle, a retired veteran, and his partner Steven. I would like to tell him about Laura and Emily, about Mohan, about my friend Tricia. I would like to tell him about my grandmother’s death and what I once believed were my conversations with god. My friend Sarah and her abusive step-father. The sources of my opinions. My lived experience. My embodied

knowledge. I don't want to argue with him anymore. It's not doing either of us any good. Maybe if we can work toward better understanding of each other, maybe if we can hear each other, we can find a way to communicate. Maybe I'll be welcome in their home again.

There is no way around it: This project is personal. It has been my attempt to find a way to understand those issues and those people that I simply do not understand. But it is not *solely* personal, or at least I hope not. By situating my project in the classroom, I hope to have connected the personal and the social, to expand possibilities not only for myself, but for my students. Because this project has also been an attempt to answer Katherine Schultz's question: "How can teachers learn to see and understand differences, reframing those differences as potential resources rather than deficits? At the same time, how might teachers look for common ground from which to build understanding?" (12). The three rhetorical theories I have examined here, as well as the three pedagogical practices I constructed, are one way to begin to "learn to see and understand differences." They are also one way to build toward understanding. Of ourselves, of each other. Of the things that connect us, the differences that separate us, and of a way to negotiate the two. In her 2007 address at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Cheryl Glenn shines light on the hope that so many of us still have, a hope that what we do in the classroom makes a difference ("Reflecting" 6). I believe it can.

This, again, is not to say that traditional argument is not a valuable skill. Nor is it to say that traditional argument is *always* oppositional. Debate formats can be an excellent way to explore the limits of our own beliefs, and to hear some of the opinions of others. But traditional argument can, at times, devolve into *unproductive* conflict, leaving

all parties unable to create new knowledge, new understanding. Catherine Lamb has argued that “if we as teachers pass on without reflection what we have been taught and ourselves practice concerning argument, whether the rest of our pedagogy intends it or not, we are contributing to education as ‘banking’” (283). She explains, “We are doing so because we are teaching students to form ‘banking’ relationships with their readers, resisting dialogue,” (284). I believe what Lamb means is that a focus solely on teaching monologic argument—what many of us have, I believe, been taught and ourselves often practice—asks that students attempt to bank knowledge in their listeners. This form of argument functions via a one-way transaction, as knowledge moves from rhetor to audience. Lamb hopes, instead, for practices that encourage dialogue and a more communal form of meaning-making. Itself, perhaps, a form of connection. I believe that pedagogies rooted in these three feminist rhetorical theories provide opportunities for reflection on what it is that we have been taught and what values and assumptions we are passing on to our students.

My attempts to teach toward understanding, to teach in such a way that students learn strategies not only of persuasion, but also of listening, communication, and understanding, contribute to the body of feminist scholarship and pedagogical practice aimed at moving beyond banking education. Such an approach to the writing classroom can help instructors and students share authority by disrupting mastery and constructing meaning through dialogue. This sort of approach can also help instructors and students deal with resistance by moving outside of a guilt/blame logic and toward one of accountability. And it can help instructors and students learn to recognize, discuss, and negotiate difference by paying attention to lived experiences and embodied response.

But I do not want to imply that every instructor should simply adopt the approach I have highlighted here. Unfortunately, a study such as this is not generalizable in the traditional sense. What has worked for me may not work for you. But I do not believe this negates the importance of such work. These approaches *may* work for you, they may not. But what this project draws attention to is the need for an expansion of content and practice at the intersections of argument and composition, argument and pedagogy. There is much work yet to be done in this area. This is but one small step.

There are things, however, that I believe we *can* take from this project, things that are more generalizable. One of these is the benefit of imagining pedagogy as the interplay of theory and practice, recognizing how one informs the other. This is not necessarily Worsham's "pedagogical imperative," but instead a call to recognize how both theory and practice inform the ways in which we, and our students, make knowledge in the classroom (qtd. in Ronald and Ritchie *Teaching* 5). To locate teaching practices in rhetorical theory encourages a more sustained attention to the connections between language and power, and asks us to interrogate what it is that we ask of our students. What values and practices are we encouraging? What values and practices are we excluding? And what are the benefits and costs of such inclusions and exclusions? Pedagogies born from rhetorical theory lead us to pay close attention to what we do with language in the classroom, and what our students do as they interact with texts, instructors, and each other. Pedagogies rooted in *feminist* rhetorical theories can help us imagine new ways to highlight the impact of gender, language, and power in the world. And pedagogical practices constructed from these three rhetorical theories provide a

means to complicate the argument culture, and envision alternative discursive and teaching practices that favor communication over mastery, understanding over control.

But these are not the only possibilities. Rhetorical theory is such a rich source of inspiration, of knowledge. In some ways, this project is an invitation to readers to imagine new possibilities in the classroom, both for their students and for themselves. There is interesting work being done in queer theory and pedagogy, in whiteness studies, in “hillbilly discourse.” Let’s extend that conversation. Let’s look at, keep looking at, how such theories inform our own practices. I would like to continue this conversation for myself. I wonder, for example, how an invitational pedagogy might be better applied to comments on student writing. More so, I wonder what invitational *writing* might look like for students, and what role it could play in their academic lives. I wonder, too, about more concrete methods for identifying across difference. The potential of such a concept seems enormous and crucial, but students and I still struggle with the practice. More generally, how else might instructors and students better negotiate difference, better hear each other, work toward better understanding?

But we might also extend this conversation further, reaching beyond the classrooms with which we are more familiar. How, for example, might such rhetorical theories work their way into other disciplines, like biology, history, even chemistry, and physics? How might they impact those teaching practices? What might these pedagogies look like in other contexts? What benefits could they have? What drawbacks?

It seems to me that this is the opportune time, the kairotic moment, to begin to imagine ways of knowing, teaching, and learning that address issues of difference and communication. Because we are not only a nation divided by race, class, gender, religion,



sexuality, and size, we are also a nation at war. It seems the opportune time to learn to better understand and better communicate. Because lately, I am reminded of a poem by poet and UNH professor Mekeel McBride. In it, McBride's narrator describes watching a goldfish dying and wants "to free it, even for a second, / from its own slow death." The narrator's companion tells her that she should forget about the goldfish, pay attention to the real tragedies in the world: poverty, child abuse, germ warfare. The narrator replies,

But that's *exactly* what I just said.

The golden thing is dying right on the other side

of the glass; I can see it and there's nothing I can do.

This is not to say that these teaching and rhetorical practices would eradicate violence. If only it were so simple. It is, however, to say that teaching discursive practices that ask rhetors and audiences to try to listen to each other, recognize each other, and understand each other may move us away from, if only incrementally, violence sparked by and directed toward difference. These practices may not be without problems, and they may not be appropriate for all situations, but they are an attempt to do something, anything.

I worry sometimes that these three rhetorics seem too idealistic, and that teaching (with) them is not enough to change practice. My hope is that students in my class go out into the larger civic realm with the tools to better hear and communicate with each other, to engender better cross-cultural communication. But I fear that they often leave what they have learned at the classroom door, because it is difficult to change well-ingrained practices. That is one of the things I learned from attempting to change my own teaching practices. It's easy to fall back onto familiar behavior. But this student, and a few others,

give me hope. In her final survey, Cole tells me that she “learned how to communicate and deal with people in a whole new way. I listen rhetorically now and try to see both sides when faced with conflict or obstacles. . . . It changed my outlook on everything and it made a significant impact on my life and my thought process.” She explains, too, that she has “retained a lifetime of knowledge,” and the course became, “not about the letter grade, but the knowledge I got out of it. It is real world lessons in this course. It teaches you how to communicate besides just in papers, but real communication. After taking this class I still might not be the best writer or do the best on the papers, but I have this knowledge that will not leave me.”

Paulo Freire defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (51). Cole and I have both begun this process, reflecting and acting upon the world in order to transform it. This project itself is that act of reflection and action, of movement, of connection. My hope is that it sparks others to similar processes of reflection on their own discourse and teaching. If language—rhetoric—creates reality then my project points to ways in which we can begin to imagine and enact new realities that perhaps haven’t yet been given enough serious attention. I hope many more such projects follow.

---

<sup>i</sup> When Tannen voices her concern about the ubiquity of an “us” versus “them,” winner-take-all mentality, she uses the term “agonistic” discourse. Others, however, dub this sort of discourse “antagonistic.” And Susan Jarratt labels it “eristic,” from the Greek *erizein*, sometimes translated as “wrangling.” While this terminology is still a contested issue, I take my cue from Debra Hawhee’s work in *Bodily Arts*. Here, Hawhee explains that the term agonism comes from the Greek *agon*, a term for ritualized struggle or contest. While this would seem to support Tannen’s use of the term, Hawhee is quick to point out that the *agon* was not simply goal-driven competition. For that, the Greeks used the term *athlios*. The *agon*, on the other hand, privileged the gathering and the struggle more than it did the outcome (15). Drawing, then, on Hawhee’s work, I imagine agonism to refer to this more productive “wrestling with” an issue. While there may be elements of struggle, the focus is on the *act of* struggle, on the gathering itself, and on the wresting with an issue. In what I call antagonistic argument, the focus is on the prize—on the attempt to “win” the argument. This distinction is made clearer in physiological terminology where agonistic muscles are the primary force in joint movement, assisting the joint in its attempt at motion. Antagonistic muscles are those that work against or oppose the agonistic muscles. I should note, however, that these are still contested terms in rhetoric and composition.

<sup>ii</sup> In her book *Rhetorical Listening*, Krista Ratcliffe does provide a chapter on “listening pedagogically,” as well as an appendix of teaching materials, but as I show in chapter 3, listening pedagogically is not, in itself, a pedagogy of rhetorical listening.

<sup>iii</sup> One could easily add a number of names to this list, including Pamela Annas; Lillian Bridwell-Bowles; Suzanne Clark; Michelle Gibson, Martha Marinara, and Deborah Meem; bell hooks; Shirley Wilson Logan; and Min-Zhan Lu, to name only a few.

<sup>iv</sup> I use the term “pedagogue” with some trepidation. I mean the term simply to mean one who teaches, who practices a specific pedagogy. While I cannot completely erase the negative connotations of this term (as related to pedantry), I hope to focus instead on the positive aspects of one whose teaching is guided by specific philosophies or politics.

<sup>v</sup> I take my cue from Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe in my choice of terminology. Ratcliffe argues that a term like “nonwhite” or “non-white” makes whiteness visible (113). Such a move attempts to minimize the prevalence of seeing race as something that is “other than” white.

<sup>vi</sup> I should note that some scholars hyphenate teacher research. More often, however, scholars seem to use teacher research as two words, hyphenating instead the title of the person conducting the research: teacher-researcher. This is the convention I follow.

---

<sup>vii</sup> As we now know, no researcher can be completely “outside” his or her project. All analysis, as a process of meaning-making, involves some form of researcher subjectivity. Still, we might imagine research projects as a kind of continuum in which the role of the researcher may be more or less integral to the classroom itself.

<sup>viii</sup> For the purposes of this project, I will limit my discussion to those texts that most clearly speak to classroom practice, leaving behind more popular texts on negotiation and mediation.

<sup>ix</sup> In this chapter, and throughout this project, when I refer to college classrooms, or composition classrooms, I am referring only to those in the United States.

<sup>x</sup> You may notice that I have just introduced another term into this discussion: communication. Another seemingly simple term, communication can also, of course, signify differently depending upon context, audience, and purpose. Throughout this project I attempt to delineate between argument and communication, as well as argument and conversation, but, admittedly, the terms sometimes bleed into each other. One of the reasons for the slippage between these terms is that they are often used to mean the same, or similar, things in common parlance. What one may call an argument (and mean that to reflect an aggressive or oppositional stance) may simply be a (more) benign form of communication to another.

<sup>xi</sup> Burke, for example, blurs the links between rhetoric and persuasion, defining rhetoric more broadly as purposeful language use. And Chaim Perelman champions multiple valid readings of texts and issues.

<sup>xii</sup> I should note that I am somewhat uncomfortable extrapolating classroom practice based primarily on textbooks and my own experiences at one university. Unfortunately, I cannot, at this point, conduct a larger study on actual classroom practices across the country. This is, however, an interesting topic for further study.

<sup>xiii</sup> I have chosen to use the term author instead of editor when discussing textbooks. While these teacher-scholars function as both authors and editors of textbook, my focus on the introductory materials makes author the more appropriate term.

<sup>xiv</sup> Work by feminists within the last twenty years has called into question the categories of “rational” and “reasonable,” pointing out that what counts as reasonable evidence often changes in different social groups and contexts, and that “rational” tends to privilege one form of “masculine” thinking.

<sup>xv</sup> How this environment is created is a little more tricky and is not the focus of this section. Foss and Griffin, however, draw heavily on the work of Gearhart so the reader will find more discussion of such environments in Chapter 2.

---

<sup>xvi</sup> Jarratt also believes that such an approach encourages students to reveal potentially private personal experience. Jarratt cites a female student who felt manipulated by a male teacher to reveal personal information. While this may certainly be a concern, particularly in expressivist classrooms, engaging this critique is beyond the scope of this project.

<sup>xvii</sup> As well as the “argument as war” metaphor analyzed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

<sup>xviii</sup> Laura Brady, Diana Fuss, and Min-Zhan Lu offer particularly cogent discussions of the potential for personal experience to essentialize.

<sup>xix</sup> All citations from Rogers’ “Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation” come from its full reproduction in Young, Becker, and Pike’s text *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. All page numbers are from this text.

<sup>xx</sup> This notion of listening with understanding and empathetic understanding sound very similar to Krista Ratcliffe’s notion of rhetorical listening. The similarities and differences will be explored in detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>xxi</sup> Postmodern theorists might balk at this notion, arguing that as there is no authentic or stable self, no such thing as a unified individual, beliefs are constantly shifting, adapting, and changing. Certainly this is true. But I believe it is just as true that most of us live *as if* we were somewhat stable entities, even if this is merely a construction. Such a construction seems, at least for many of us, based in large part on what we believe to be “true”—whether that be political affiliation, religious beliefs (or lack thereof), or beliefs about race, class, or gender. To have such beliefs or core values challenged, to attempt to really see, as it were, from a very different standpoint can at least *feel* like a challenge to our very identities, to our very selves, even if these selves are in fact a construction.

<sup>xxii</sup> While Hairston’s discussion of Rogerian rhetoric was probably the first of its kind to garner attention in the field of composition and rhetoric, she was not, in fact, the first to mention Rogerian rhetoric in a discipline-related publication. In 1953, Allan E. Shields published an article in *The Journal of Higher Education* entitled “Socrates Was Not a Rogerian: Rather, He Was a Midwife in the Birth of Ideas.” Shields does not specifically name Rogerian rhetoric in his article, perhaps because the term did not seem to take hold until the 1970s; instead, he challenges the notion that Socrates provides an example of non-directive approaches to teaching. It is clear from his title, however, that Shields saw the Rogerian approach as one example (perhaps the quintessential example) of such non-directive pedagogies.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Paul Bator offers a response to Lunsford in his 1980 CCC article “Aristotelian and Rogerian Rhetoric.”

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> In the third edition of her textbook *A Contemporary Rhetoric*, Hairston modified her final step to read, “a proposal for resolving the issue in a way that injures neither party” (211). Her original phrasing, while pointing out what both sides may gain, focuses on the solution as proposed by the writer. Of course the writer *as writer* must propose such a solution, but Hairston seemed to recognize the persuasive undertone. Here, the writer persuades the reader that the reader too can gain from the writer’s solution. By shifting to passive voice, Hairston draws attention away from the writer’s act of proposing, reducing the appearance of persuasion. Still, however, the writer *as writer* must be the one proposing, even in the revised version.

<sup>xxv</sup> Rogers’ ideas are based in client-centered therapy—an arena in which the therapist acts primarily as listener, allowing space for the client him or herself to re-envision his or her world. Given this goal, and given Rogers’ assertion that the therapist must be comfortable with any outcome (*Client* 48), any attempt by the writer or speaker to change or persuade an audience seems at odds with Rogerian idea(l)s. In *Client-Centered Therapy*, for example, Rogers has stated that the therapist must be comfortable with any outcome (48). But in “Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation,” Rogers explains that he has found the use of empathetic understanding “the most effective agent we know for altering the basic personality structure of an individual, and improving his relationships and his communication with others” (285). He goes on to say that “if I can listen to what he [the patient] can tell me, if I can understand how it seems to him, if I can see its personal meaning for him, then I will be releasing potent forces of change in him” (286). This approach can “bring about major changes in personality” (286). In fact, in *Client-Centered Therapy*, Rogers explains that the therapist’s acceptance of any outcome allows him to “realize the vital strength of the capacity of the individual for constructive action” (48). The constructive action in this case appears to be change. So while Rogers’ approach to psychotherapy was client-centered and non-directive, it seems evident that change would be the desired outcome. In dealing with someone with psychotic or neurotic tendencies, Rogers hoped that by listening with the patient, by truly understanding his view of the world, the patient would feel comfortable enough to fully explore his own perceptions. In doing so, the patient himself would be able to effect personality changes. Change—toward a more productive and healthy state of mind—would have to be the desired result.

Granted, in this case, the therapist may not be *persuading* the client to change, but instead creating a space in which the client can change his image and therefore change himself. We may hear echoes of Gearhart in Rogers’ approach to client-centered therapy. In both cases, one tries to create an environment in which the listener/reader may, if he or she already holds the internal conditions for change, might change him or herself. For Rogers, however, I imagine the imperative to change is stronger than it might be for Gearhart, particularly in terms of the psychotic or neurotic about which he often writes. Rogers did not seem to believe that traditional persuasive techniques could facilitate the kind of change for which he was hoping. His technique, then, seems to work toward persuasion, just from a different angle. The intent-to-change is still quite present.

---

<sup>xxvi</sup> See, for example, *Having Your Say*, *The Informed Argument*, and *Perspectives on Argument*.

<sup>xxvii</sup> A copy of the student information handout can be found in the appendix.

<sup>xxviii</sup> In this section I will be focusing primarily on oral communication. I will address written communication in the next chapter.

<sup>xxix</sup> There are a number of similarities between invitational rhetoric and Rogerian argument, including creating a safe environment, listening to and understanding all sides of an issue, and a willingness by the rhetor to concede the validity of the listener's viewpoint(s). But the primary goal of Rogerian rhetoric—at least how it is generally used in composition classrooms—is still change, whether by way of persuading the listener to agree with the rhetor or in the form of consensus.

<sup>xxx</sup> Attributing these concepts to the proper author becomes tricky because some articles are written by Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin ("Beyond Persuasion" and "A Feminist Perspective") and others are written by Sonja K. Foss, Cindy L. Griffin, and Karen A. Foss ("Transforming Rhetoric"), yet all three articles deal with many of the same concepts. It is especially confusing given the fact that Karen Foss did not collaborate on the original proposal for invitational rhetoric, but has participated in the defense of it. In an attempt to avoid confusion, I will refer to the article that most clearly engages the issue at hand and will attribute those viewpoints to that article's authors, distinguishing between those opinions voiced solely by Foss and Griffin and those offered by Foss, Griffin, and Foss. To *add* to the confusion, Foss, Griffin, and Foss list their names in this order on their article. The three of them also edited a collection, however, in which they list themselves as Foss, Foss, and Griffin. I do not reference the collection in this chapter, but I do refer to it in Chapter 1. I apologize for the confusion but, unfortunately, cannot find a better way around it.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Certainly there may be an element of persuasion in this answer, but that element is minimal. If I start to explain *why* I prefer Vinny's coffee cart, we move further into the realm of intent-to-persuade.

<sup>xxxii</sup> I am not yet ready to say that such a course could not (or does not already) exist, only that it would look strikingly different from the classrooms that most of us currently imagine.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> This last strategy seems to surprise students. Some are visibly taken aback when I admit "not knowing" my opinion or not knowing The Answer. I should say, however, that while this may be a useful approach for seasoned teachers it could be difficult, even detrimental, to new instructors who are not yet comfortable with their authority in the classroom.

---

<sup>xxxiv</sup> This quote, like most long student quotes in this project, is reproduced “as-is.”

<sup>xxxv</sup> I rely heavily on Ratcliffe’s book *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* as it is the only sustained discussion of rhetorical listening in composition and rhetoric. All citations are from this book-length project (and not her article on the same topic) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> I should note, also, that while Ratcliffe includes these moves in what seems like a four-step sequence, she takes pains to say that they are “not necessarily linear” (26).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> We can see similarities here between invitational rhetoric and rhetorical listening in that in both instances, at least one of the subjects must choose a particular stance or approach before or while engaging with others. In the case of the former, the rhetor can choose to approach the audience in an invitational format. In the latter, it is the listener, or audience, who can (first) choose to enter the exchange with the goal of listening rhetorically.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Ratcliffe is quick to note the complicated and often troubled history of the term “understanding.” Understanding, she remembers, can be aligned with authorial intent, a concept criticized by many in literary studies (and one leading Roland Barthes to declare the death of the author). The notion of authorial intention has also drawn critiques of the expressivist movement in composition studies, pointing out the problems with imagining students (or any writer, for that matter) as unified individuals trying to express the unique thoughts of a singular mind.

<sup>xxxix</sup> This is not to dismiss the great strides made by the second wave of the feminist movement—advancements that make it much easier for me, a young woman in the academy, to write this dissertation.

<sup>xl</sup> Although many believe that Kennedy mistakenly declared that he was, in fact, a jelly donut, it seems that Kennedy’s declaration “Ich bin ein Berliner” can be taken to mean that he considers himself (identifies with) a citizen of Berlin. While “Berliner” is, in fact, *also* a kind of jelly donut, most Berliners would probably not have assumed Kennedy was talking about the pastry.

<sup>xli</sup> Ratcliffe explains that while she draws from a number of different courses throughout her teaching career, this particular chapter is based primarily on the work of juniors and seniors in an advanced writing course she taught in 2000 at Marquette University.

<sup>xlii</sup> It is worth noting that Ratcliffe’s multiple definitions of resistance, especially post-Freudian resistance, complicate the common usage of this term in the classroom. Resistance in these terms includes what we might call “passive resistance”—including writer’s or speaker’s block, simply going through the motions, “overidentification”



---

resulting in the inability to move beyond personal experience, and “nonproductive guilt,” (138).

<sup>xliii</sup> Students have successfully argued for one late pass for a major assignment, a late pass for a minor assignment, and dropping the lowest minor assignment grade, for example.

<sup>xliv</sup> Because this section focuses specifically on one student’s attempts to listen rhetorically to discourses, both hers’ and others’, we may seem far afield from a pedagogy of rhetorical listening. In some ways, that’s true. This section is less about my own teaching practices than it is about students’ attempt to listen rhetorically. But I believe that one of the major aspects of a pedagogy of rhetorical listening is designing assignments that encourage students to try to practice rhetorical listening skills. This assignment is the most concerted effort I made to enact this aspect of my pedagogy.

<sup>xlv</sup> You can find the complete assignment description in the appendix.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Lori also notes that some students pay for their own educations, but she focuses primarily on parents.

<sup>xlvii</sup> I should note that students in my Persuasive Writing class vote on the readings for the semester. While I choose the textbook in advance, students vote for their top five sections and we usually read through the top three or four.

<sup>xlviii</sup> I have often heard this prefacing in my classes in a different form: “I’m not a feminist, but . . .” I thank Laura Waldon for pointing out that even in these moments, female students may be trying to distance themselves from a perceived lesbian identity, associating feminism with man-hating and therefore female homosexuality.

<sup>xlix</sup> The one clear exception in this particular group was the class couple—a young man and woman who announced on the second day of class that they were dating and had been for some time.

<sup>i</sup> Although I would have loved to have collected their freewrites for this project, I felt that there could be something larger at stake here. So I explained that while I would ask for volunteers to share what they wrote (or a piece of what they wrote), no one would be forced to reveal their freewrite to me or to the class.

<sup>li</sup> Upon reading a draft of this chapter, Meagan reminded me that when we got to the Houghton-Hancock airport and the shuttle picked us up, we both instinctively sat right next to each other, hip to hip again, even though there was ample room on the shuttle. It’s amazing how quickly that physical closeness can become naturalized. And how quickly it can become denaturalized again.

---

<sup>lii</sup> Descartes was, of course, not the first to forward the idea of truth through rational or intellectual means. We could reach back to Plato and Socrates for a separation of reason and emotion, mind and soul.

<sup>liii</sup> Because female students are often already socially conditioned to be passive receptors of information, such a reading is indeed gendered. But I want to thank Meagan Rodgers for drawing my attention to the heteronormative sexualized nature of this discussion. Assuming that only females can be positioned as “opening[s],” that only females can be asked to “swallow,” or be “force-fed” or “raped” assumes a heteronormativity. I would argue that females are more often assumed to be in this heretosexualized receptive position, but the point is well-taken, and worth further discussion.

<sup>liv</sup> The work of Lakoff and Johnson is one example of how the categories that I am forwarding here are not as discrete as I am currently making them seem. The metaphors that these authors describe also reflect embodied language—language that draws attention to our bodily experiences. But the act of constructing metaphors based on the body is itself a reaction to embodied response and helps us construct meaning through the body. The next section, embodied rhetoric, will further complicate these categories. For now, I try to maintain them for the sake of clearer definitions.

<sup>lv</sup> Students read a number of scholars, including Stephen North and Patricia Bizzell, who make a case for anti-foundationalism. When students then read a counter-argument by Stanley Fish, they were “outraged,” wondering why scholars kept making a case for anti-foundationalism when Fish had already “proved—and that was several years ago—that practice has nothing to do with theory” (110).

<sup>lvi</sup> Bordo credits Thomas Nagel with the phrase “view from nowhere” (217).

<sup>lvii</sup> Such thinking also privileges a gender and sex binary, juxtaposing men and women as if these were the only two biological categories of sex.

<sup>lviii</sup> Tompkins concludes her article by exclaiming, “I’ve taken off the straitjacket and it feels so good” (178).

<sup>lix</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this critique, please see Chapter 1.

<sup>lx</sup> The role of emotion in the composition classroom is an incredibly complicated topic, one that I cannot do justice to here. While I argue that an embodied pedagogy must make space for emotion, I do not want to minimize the problems with emotion in the classroom. What, for example, is an instructor to do with an enraged student? Or, for that matter, how are students to deal with an outpouring of emotion—crying, for example—from their instructor? Such heightened emotional responses can make students and instructors feel uncomfortable and even unsafe. So it is with caution that I ask for a recognition of the role of emotion in the classroom, hoping that more work will be done in this area.

---

<sup>lxi</sup> I would like to be able to say that by the end of the term, especially by the end of the third semester of this study, students were less likely to equate embodied rhetoric solely with emotion, or that such emotion was at least imagined to be a more complicated relationship between biology and social construction. But the end of the semester survey still reveals students who seem to believe embodied rhetoric is simply an inclusion of “the author’s personal feelings,” “the author’s emotions,” and “the authors [*sic*] true emotions.” Fewer students seemed to make these comments, but that, of course, does not necessarily mean that fewer believed embodied rhetoric to be the revelation of emotion. It simply means that fewer students expressed this opinion in the end of the term survey than in the online discussion board posts.

<sup>lxii</sup> Students at UNH are required to take English 401: First-Year Writing in which they write what is generally referred to as the personal experience essay. For most students in 503, this is their point of reference for personal writing. Some students, however, have also taken (or are also taking) English 501: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction Writing, and therefore have more experience with forms of personal writing.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Here are just a few of the ways in which scholars often conflate these terms: Anne Herrington connects the personal with “personal background, experiences, and perceptions – sometimes via narratives” (Symposium 48). Jane E. Hindman defines “the personal” as “an individual’s affect and/or narrative and/or experience” (“Thoughts” 11). Gesa Kirsch and Min-Zhan Lu equate “the personal” with “personal narrative” (“Symposium” 42), and Kirsch and Ritchie associate “the personal” with “experience as a source of knowledge,” and with “our own histories as sources for research and scholarship” (140,141), and Kirsch uses “the personal” and “personal experience” interchangeably (Symposium 57). Lu, in her contribution “Reading the Personal: Critical Trajectories,” also talks about “lived experience” and “personal narrative” in relation to the personal (Symposium 54-55). Nancy K. Miller connects “the personal” to “self-narrative,” (2). In “Confronting the “Essential” Problem” Joy Ritchie defines the personal in feminist classrooms as a “focus on the lived experience of women” (95). Jacqueline Jones Royster links “the personal” with “personal experience” (“A View” 229). Candace Spigelman warns that “distinguishing between the various uses of the personal risks oversimplification: categories easily overlap and run together, often replicating form while differing in purpose” (64) but admits that she uses “the terms “personal writing” and “personal narrative” interchangeably to refer to the ways in which writers make sense of their lives by organizing their experience into first-person stories” (65-6). And Victor Villanueva wants to avoid binaries, but seems to come close to equating the personal with “lived experience” (Symposium 52).

<sup>lxiv</sup> My relationship to space is also based in part on my gender, and my attempt to consciously take up more space than I feel like I am supposed to as a woman.

<sup>lxv</sup> This essay originally appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1999.

---

<sup>lxvi</sup> This text was republished in 2003. Citations are from the 2003 edition.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Cheryl Glenn's 2007 *CCCC* Chair's Address, "Representing Ourselves," makes clear in how many different ways language, difference, violence, and (a lack of) understanding connect and combine. I thank Professor Glenn for sending me the manuscript of her address, which will be published in *CCC* December of 2008. In-text citations reference this manuscript.

## Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Annas, Pamela. "Style as Politics: A Feminist Approach to the Teaching of Writing." *College English* 47 (1985): 360-71.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
- Ardis, Ann. "Presence of Mind, Presence of Body: Embodying Positionality in the Classroom." *Hypatia*. 7.2 (1992): 166-76.
- Banks, William. "Written through the Body: Disruptions and "Personal" Writing." *College English* 66 (2003): 21-40.
- Barnett, Timothy. *Teaching Argument in The Composition Course: Background Readings*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.
- Bator, Paul. "Aristotelian and Rogerian Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication* 31.4 (1980): 427-32.
- Baumlin, James S. "Persuasion, Rogerian Rhetoric, and Imaginative Play." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 17.1 (Winter 1987): 33-43.
- Belenky, Mary, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. New York: Basic Books, 1986.
- Bell, Sandra, Marina Morrow, and Evangelia Tastsoglou. "Teaching in Environments of Resistance: Toward ad Critical, Feminist, and Antiracist Pedagogy." *Meeting the Challenge: Innovative Feminist Pedagogies in Action*. Ed. Maralee Mayberry and Ellen Cronan Rose. New York: Routledge, 1999. 23-46.
- Berthoff, Ann. "The Teacher as Researcher." *Reclaiming the Classroom: Teacher Research as an Agency for Change*. Ed. Dixie Goswami and Peter Stillman. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987. 28-39.
- Bloom, Lynn Z. "Teaching College English as a Woman." Kirsch et al. 534-41.
- Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.
- Brady, Laura. "The Reproduction of Othering." *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words*. Ed Susan C. Jarratt and Lynn Worsham. New York: MLA, 1998. 21-44.

- Brandt, Deborah, Ellen Cushman, Anne Ruggles Gere, Anne Herrington, Richard E. Miller, Victor Villanueva, Min-Zhan Lu, Gesa Kirsch. "The Politics of the Personal: Storying our Lives Against the Grain." *College English* 64 (2001): 41-62.
- Bridwell-Bowles, Lillian. "Discourse and Diversity: Experimental Writing Within the Academy." Kirsch et al. 294-313.
- Bridwell-Bowles, Lillian. "Freedom, Form, Function: Varieties of Academic Discourse." *College Composition and Communication* 46.1 (1995): 46-61.
- Brodkey, Linda. "Writing on the Bias." *College English* 56: 527-47.
- Buck, Gertrude. *A Course in Argumentative Writing*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1899.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.
- Butcher, Laurie. "Textbook question." Personal email to Abby Knoblauch. April 08, 2008.
- Cannizzaro, Carla. "Question for Carla." Personal email to Abby Knoblauch. May 12, 2008.
- Charney, Davida H., Christina M. Neuwirth, David S. Kaufer, and Cheryl Geisler. *Having Your Say: Reading and Writing Public Arguments*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.
- Clark, Suzanne. "Argument and Composition." *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words*. Eds. Susan Jarratt and Lynn Worsham. New York: MLA, 1998. 94-99.
- Clark, Suzanne. "Rhetoric, Social Construction, and Gender: Is It Bad to Be Sentimental?" *Writing Theory and Critical Theory*. Ed. John Clifford and John Schilb. New York: MLA, 1994. 96-108.
- Coffey, Amanda and Sara Delamont. Introduction. *Feminism and the Classroom Teacher: Research, Praxis, and Pedagogy*. Ed. Amanda Coffey and Sara Delamont. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Cohee, Gail E., et al. *The Feminist Teacher Anthology: Pedagogies and Classroom Strategies*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1998.
- Condit, Celeste Michelle. "In Praise of Eloquent Diversity: Gender and Rhetoric as Public Persuasion." *Women's Studies in Communication* 20 (1997): 91-116.

- Cool Hand Luke*. Dir. Stuart Rosenberg. Perf. Paul Newman. Warner, 1967.
- Crawford, Ilene. "Building a Theory of Affect in Cultural Studies Composition Pedagogy." *JAC* 22 (2002): 678-84.
- Crusius, Timothy W. and Carolyn E. Channell. *The Aims of Argument: A Text and Reader*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006.
- Cutler, Mary Rose. "Textbook question." Personal email to Abby Knoblauch. April 14, 2008.
- Daly, Mary and Jane Caputi. *Websters' First Intergalactic Wickedary of The English Language*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1987.
- Daniell, Beth. "Dissoi Logoi: Women's Rhetoric and Classroom Practice." *Teaching Rhetorica: Theory, Pedagogy, Practice*. Ed Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2006.
- Davis, D. Diane. "Finitude's Clamour: Or, Notes Toward a Communitarian Literacy." *College Composition and Communication* 53.1 (2001): 119-45.
- Ede, Lisa. "Is Rogerian Rhetoric Really Rogerian?" *Rhetoric Review* 3.1 (1984): 40-48.
- Eisenhart, Margaret and Hilda Borko. *Designing Classroom Research: Themes, Issues, and Struggles*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993.
- Elbow, Peter. "Appendix Essay: The Doubting Game and the Believing Game—An Analysis of the Intellectual Enterprise." *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973 (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, reprinted in 1988).
- Elliott, Mary. "Coming Out in the Classroom: A Return to the Hard Place." Kirsch et al. 411-24.
- Emmel, Barbara, Paula Resch, and Deborah Tannen, eds. *Argument Revisited; Argument Redefined: Negotiating Meaning in the Composition Classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.
- Faigley, Lester and Jack Selzer. *Good Reasons with Contemporary Arguments: Reading, Designing, and Writing Effective Arguments*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.
- Fisher, Berenice Malka. *No Angel in the Classroom: Teaching Through Feminist Discourse*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001.
- Fleckenstein, Kristie. "Words Made Flesh: Fusing Imagery and Language in a Polymorphic Literacy." *College English* 66 (2004): 612-31.

- Flynn, Elizabeth A. "Composing as a Woman." Kirsch et al. 243-55.
- Foss, Karen A., Sonja K. Foss, and Cindy L. Griffin. *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999.
- Foss, Sonja K., and Cindy L. Griffin. "A Feminist Perspective on Rhetorical Theory: Toward a Classification of Boundaries." *Western Journal of Communication* 56 (1992): 330-49.
- Foss, Sonja K. and Cindy L. Griffin. "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric." *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 2-18.
- Foss, Sonja K., Cindy L. Griffin, and Karen A. Foss. "Transforming Rhetoric Through Feminist Reconstruction: A Response to the Gender Diversity Perspective." *Women's Studies in Communication* 20 (1997): 117-35.
- Franklin, Betty Smith. "The Teacher's Body." Freedman and Stoddard Holmes 15-22.
- Freedman, Diane P. and Martha Stoddard Holmes, eds. *The Teacher's Body: Embodiment, Authority, and Identity in the Academy*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2003.
- Freedman, Diane. "Life Work Through Teaching and Scholarship." *Personal Effects: The Social Character of Scholarly Writing*. Ed. Deborah Holdstein and David Bleich. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2001. 199-219.
- Freedman, Diane P. and Martha Stoddard Holmes. Introduction. Freedman and Stoddard Holmes 1-14.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Fulkerson, Richard. "Transcending Our Conception of Argument in Light of Feminist Critiques." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 32 (1996): 199-217.
- Fuss, Diana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Gearhart, Sally Miller. "The Womanization of Rhetoric." Kirsch et al. 53-60.
- Gibson, Michelle, Martha Marinara, and Deborah Meem. "Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performances of Class, Gender, and Sexuality." Kirsch et al. 466-87.
- Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.



- Glenn, Cheryl. "Representing Ourselves: 2007 CCCC's Chair's Address." Unpublished Manuscript.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1997.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004.
- Grant-Davie, Keith. "Coding Data: Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Interpretation." *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Ed. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 270-86.
- Grumet, Madeleine. "Afterword: My Teacher's Body." Freedman and Stoddard Holmes 249-58.
- Hairston, Maxine. "Carl Rogers' Alternative Approach to Traditional Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication* 27.4 (1976): 373-77.
- Hairston, Maxine. *A Contemporary Rhetoric*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982.
- Hall, Stephen. "The Bully in the Mirror." *Dialogues: An Argument Rhetoric and Reader*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed. Gary Goshgarian and Kathleen Krueger. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 418-24.
- Hawhee, Deborah. *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2004.
- Herndl, Diane Price. "Johnny Mnemonic Meets the Bimbo: Feminist Pedagogy and Postmodern Performance." Freedman and Stoddard Holmes 59-68.
- Heyl, Barbara Sherman. "Talking Across the Differences in Collaborative Fieldwork: Unanticipated Consequences." *The Sociological Quarterly*. 38.1 (1997): 1-18.
- Hindman, Jane. "Making Writing Matter: Using 'The Personal' to Recover[y] an Essential[ist] Tension in Academic Discourse." *College English* 64 (2001): 88-108.
- Hindman, Jane. "Thoughts on Reading 'the Personal': Toward a Discursive Ethics of Professional Critical Literacy." *College English* 66 (2003): 9-20.
- Hindman, Jane E. "Writing an Important Body of Scholarship: A Proposal for an Embodied Rhetoric of Professional Practice." *JAC* 22 (2002): 93-118.

- Hobson, David. "Action and Reflection: Narrative and Journaling in Teacher Research." *Teachers Doing Research: The Power of Action Through Inquiry*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Gail Burnaford, Joseph Fischer, and David Hobson. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001. 7-27.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Jarratt, Susan C. "Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict." *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Kirsch et al. 263-80.
- Jarratt, Susan C. "Feminist Pedagogy." *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. Ed Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. 113-31.
- Johannsen, Richard L. "The Emerging Concept of Communication as Dialogue." *The Quarterly Speech Journal* 57.4 (1971): 373-82.
- Johnson, Cheryl. "Participatory Rhetoric and the Teacher as Racial/Gendered Subject." *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Kirsch et al. 388-97.
- Johnson, Sonia. *The Ship That Sailed into the Living Room: Sex and Intimacy Reconsidered*. Estancia, NM: Wildfire Press, 1991.
- Karis, Bill. "Conflict in Collaboration: A Burkean Perspective." *Rhetoric Review* 8.1 (1989): 113-26.
- Kates, Susan. *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education, 1885-1937*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2001.
- Kirsch, Gesa E., and Joy S. Ritchie. "Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research." Kirsch et al. 140-59.
- Kirsch, Gesa E., Fay Spencer Maor, Lance Massey, Lee Nickoson-Massey, Mary P. Sheridan-Rabideau. *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.
- Kornheiser, Tony. "Women Have More to Say on Everything." *Dialogues: An Argument Rhetoric and Reader*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed. Gary Goshgarian and Kathleen Krueger. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 440-42.
- Kroll, Barry. "Arguing Differently." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*. 5.1 (2005): 37-60.

- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980.
- Lamb, Catherine. "Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition." Kirsch et al. 281-93.
- Lamm, Robert and Justin Everett. *Dynamic Argument*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.
- Lassner, Phyllis. "Feminist Responses to Rogerian Argument." *Rhetoric Review* 8.2 (1990): 220-32.
- Logan, Shirley Wilson. "'When and Where I Enter': Race, Gender, and Composition Studies." Kirsch et al. 425-35.
- Loughran, John. "Teacher as Researcher: The PAVOT Project." *Learning from Teacher Research*. Ed. John Loughran, Ian Mitchell, Judi Mitchell. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002.
- Lu, Min-Zhan. "Reading and Writing Differences: The Problematic of Experience." Kirsch et al. 436-46.
- Lunsford, Andrea. "Aristotelian vs. Rogerian Argument: A Reassessment." *College Composition and Communication* 30.2 (1979): 146-51.
- Lunsford, Andrea. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.
- Lunsford, Andrea Abernethy, and Lisa Ede. "Rhetoric in a New Key: Women and Collaboration." *Rhetoric Review* 8 (1990): 234-41.
- Lunsford, Andrea A. and John J. Ruszkiewicz. *everything's an argument with readings*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.
- Macdonald, Amie A. and Susan Sanchez-Casal, eds. *Twenty-First-Century Classrooms: Pedagogies of Identity and Difference*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Mattingly, Carol. "Valuing the Personal: Feminist Concerns for the Writing Classroom." *Gender and Academe: Feminist Pedagogy and Politics*. Ed. Lagretta Tallent Lenker. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994. 153-66.
- Mattingly, Carol. *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002.
- Mayberry, Maralee and Ellen Cronan Rose, eds. *Meeting the Challenge: Innovative Feminist Pedagogies in Action*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- McBride, Mekeel. *The Deepest Part of the River*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon UP, 2001.

- Meisenhelder, Susan. "Redefining 'Powerful' Writing: Toward a Feminist Theory of Composition." *Journal of Thought* 20 (1985): 184-95.
- Memering, Dean and William Palmer. *Discovering Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Writing with Readings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006.
- Micciche, Laura. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2007.
- Miller, Nancy K. "Getting Personal: Autobiography as Cultural Criticism." In *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 1-30.
- Miller, Richard E. "The Nervous System." *College English* 58 (1996): 265-86.
- Murray, Donald. *Write to Learn*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Thompson Wadsworth, 2004.
- Myers, Greg. "Reality, Consensus, and Reform in the Rhetoric of Composition Teaching." *College English* 48 (1986): 154-74.
- Perelman, Chaim and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1969.
- Pipher, Mary. "Saplings in the Storm." *Dialogues: An Argument Rhetoric and Reader*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed. Gary Goshgarian and Kathleen Krueger. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 411-17.
- Ram Jam. "Black Betty." *Black Betty*. Epic, 1977.
- Ramage, John D, John C. Bean, and June Johnson. *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a 'Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct.'" *College Composition and Communication* 51 (1999): 195-24.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2005.
- Ray, Ruth. *The Practice of Theory: Teacher Research in Composition*. Urbana: NCTE, 1993.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.

- Richards, Jennifer. *Rhetoric*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Ritchie, Joy and Kate Ronald. *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2001.
- Ritchie, Joy S. "Confronting the 'Essential' Problem: Reconnecting Feminist Theory and Pedagogy." Kirsch et al. 79-102.
- Ronald, Kate, and Hephzibah Roskelly. "Embodied Voices: Peter Elbow's Physical Rhetoric." *Writing with Elbow*. Ed. Pat Belanoff, Marcia Dickson, and Sheryl Fontaine. Logan UT: Utah State UP, 2002. 210-22.
- Ronald, Kate, and Joy Ritchie. "Introduction: Asking 'So What?': Expansive Pedagogies of Experience and Action." *Teaching Rhetorica: Theory, Pedagogy, Practice*. Ed. Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2006. 1-12.
- Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary: The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared*. New York: Free Press, 1989.
- Rottenberg, Annette T. and Donna Haisty Winchell. *The Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.
- Rottenberg, Annette T. and Donna Haisty Winchell. *The Structure of Argument*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "A View from a Bridge: Afrafeminist Ideologies and Rhetorical Studies." Kirsch et al. 206-33.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own." *Cross-Talk in Composition Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: NCTE, 2003. 611-22.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2000.
- Ryan, Kathleen J. and Elizabeth J. Natalle. "Fusing Horizons: Standpoint Hermeneutics and Invitational Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31 (2001): 69-90.
- Schultz, Katherine. *Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Difference*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003.
- Spigelman, Candace. *Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

- Stenberg, Shari J. "Embodied Classrooms, Embodied Knowledges: Re-Thinking the Mind/Body Split." *Composition Studies* 30.2 (2002): 43-60.
- Stenberg, Shari, and Amy Lee. "Developing Pedagogies: Learning the Teaching of English." *College English* 64 (2002): 326-47.
- Sullivan, Patricia A. "Composing Culture: A Place for the Personal." *College English* 66 (2003): 41-54.
- Sullivan, Patricia A. "Feminism and Methodology in Composition Studies." *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Ed. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 37-61.
- Tannen, Deborah. "I'm Sorry, I Won't Apologize." *Dialogues: An Argument Rhetoric and Reader*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed. Gary Goshgarian and Kathleen Krueger. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 443-46.
- Tannen, Deborah. *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1999.
- Tompkins, Jane. "Me and My Shadow." *The Intimate Critique: Autobiographical Literary Criticism*. Eds. Diane Freedman, Olivia Frey, Frances Murphy Zauhar. Durham: Duke UP, 1993. 23-40.
- Toulmin, Stephen. *The Uses of Argument*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2005.
- Trebilcot, Joyce. "Dyke Methods: Principles for the Discovery/Creation of the Withstanding." *Hypatia* 3 (1988): 1-13.
- Trimbur, John. "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning." *College English* 51 (1989): 602-16.
- University of New Hampshire Diversity Initiatives. Fall 2007. Student Statistics. <<http://www.unh.edu/diversity/pdf/data/2007/students.pdf>>. Updated April 17, 2008. May 2, 2008.
- University of New Hampshire Diversity Progress Report. 2007. <<http://www.unh.edu/diversity/pdf/2007%20Diversity%20Progress%20Report.pdf>>. May 2, 2008.
- "U.S. Soldier Uses Quran in Target Practice." Reuters. *msn.com*. May 18, 2008. <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24693647&GT1=43001>>
- Villanueva, Victor. *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993.

- Welch, Nancy. "Taking Sides." *Teaching Rhetorica: Theory, Pedagogy, Practice*. Ed. Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2006. 145-59.
- White, Fred D. and Simone J. Billings. *Well-Crafted Argument: A Guide and Reader*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *Written on the Body*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- Wood, Nancy. *Essentials of Argument*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006.
- Yagelski, Robert F. and Robert K. Miller. *The Informed Argument*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Thomson, 2004.
- Young, Richard E., Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike. *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World Inc, 1970.

## **APPENDIX**



## English 503 Student Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to help me (your instructor) get a better idea of your perception of the class. **I will not see this questionnaire until after I turn in final grades, so please understand that your answers will not affect your grade.** This questionnaire is only helpful to me if you answer honestly. I do not imagine that everything in the class went well. I do not imagine that the class worked for all students. Your honest feedback will help me to improve the class and my teaching style. As you know, it will also help me further my dissertation work. **This questionnaire is two-sided. Please remember to complete both sides. Please use a separate sheet of paper to complete your answers.**

### General Questions about the Course:

1. Please comment on your original expectations for the course. What did you expect to learn? What sort of work did you expect to do?
2. Please comment on how the course met or challenged those expectations. What did you actually learn in the course? What work did you actually do in the course?
3. Given your experience with composition courses at UNH, did you have any expectations concerning *how* this class would be taught? Were you, for example, expecting primarily lecture, small group work, large group discussion, student presentations?
4. Did the teaching of this course confirm those expectations? If so, in what way? If not, what teaching approaches were used that you weren't expecting?
5. What was the most useful teaching approach for you? In what way was it most effective?
6. What was the least useful teaching approach for you? In what way was it ineffective?
7. Please comment on your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the way that the course was taught. Please explain as thoroughly as possible why you were satisfied or dissatisfied.
8. Please comment on your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the content of the course. Please explain as thoroughly as possible why you were satisfied or dissatisfied.

### General Questions about the Study:

1. Once the instructor explained the study of which this course was a part, did your expectations for the course change? If so, in what way?
2. Once the instructor explained the study of which this course was a part, did you experience any additional concerns?
3. If you did have additional concerns, what were they and what caused those concerns? (Please be as specific as possible)
4. Now that you have completed the course, do you feel as though those concerns were justified? Please explain as thoroughly as possible.
5. Do you feel as though there were any benefits in participating in this study? If so, what were they?

### Questions about Specific Assignments:

1. Think back to the embodied rhetoric assignment(s). You read William Banks' article "Written Through the Body," responded to it on the course discussion board, and wrote an embodied analysis of either Hall or Pipher's essay<sup>1</sup>, looking, also, for ways in which the author employed embodied rhetoric.
  - a. Before this class, had you heard of embodied rhetoric?
  - b. Did you find the inclusion of embodied rhetoric useful in your study of persuasive writing? In what way?

- c. Can you imagine a time in your life when you might use embodied rhetoric? If so, when might that be?
  - d. Please comment on your instructor's use of embodied rhetoric *as a teaching strategy*. Did she use this approach? If so, where/when? To what effect? Is this something you'd like to see more or less of? Why?
2. Think back to the invitational rhetoric assignment(s). You read Foss & Griffin's article "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for An Invitational Rhetoric" and analyzed Susan Faludi and Karen Lehrman's letters to each other for their use of invitational rhetoric. Your instructor also tried using invitational rhetoric in one of your discussion board assignments and asked you to comment on that approach online.
  - a. Before this class, had you heard of invitational rhetoric?
  - b. Did you find the inclusion of invitational rhetoric useful in your study of persuasive writing? In what way?
  - c. Can you imagine a time in your life when you might use invitational rhetoric? If so, when might that be?
  - d. Please comment on your instructor's use of invitational rhetoric *as a teaching strategy*. Did she use this approach? If so, where/when? To what effect? Is this something you'd like to see more or less of? Why?
3. Think back to the rhetorical listening assignments. You read Krista Ratcliffe's article "Rhetorical Listening." You then attempted to use rhetorical listening in two of your major assignments (the debate project and the final proposal project).
  - a. Before this class, had you heard of rhetorical listening?
  - b. Did you find the inclusion of rhetorical listening useful in your study of persuasive writing? In what way?
  - c. Can you imagine a time in your life when you might use the rhetorical listening? If so, when might that be?
  - d. Please comment on your instructor's use of rhetorical listening *as a teaching strategy*. Did she use this approach? If so, where/when? To what effect? Is this something you'd like to see more or less of? Why?
4. Think back to the other rhetorical approaches that you've encountered in this class: traditional rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos), Rogerian rhetoric, and the rhetorics of silence.
  - a. Before this class, had you heard of any of these approaches?
  - b. Did you find the inclusion of these approaches useful in your study of persuasive writing? In what way?
  - c. Can you imagine a time in your life when you might use any of these strategies? If so, when might that be?
  - d. Please comment on your instructor's use of any of these rhetorical strategies *as teaching strategies*. Did she use any of these approaches? If so, where/when? To what effect? Is this something you'd like to see more or less of? Why?

## **Student Information Handout**

Name:

Email address:

Reason for taking this class:

Describe yourself as a reader in one word:

Now describe yourself as a reader in a brief paragraph:

Describe yourself as a writer in one word:

Now describe yourself as a writer in a brief paragraph:

In regards to this class, what are you excited about?

In regards to this class, what are you nervous about?

Anything else you'd like to tell me:

## Campus Issue Project

Your rhetorical analyses have, to this point, dealt with topics that may or may not have personal implications for you. For this assignment, I want to bring the topic closer to you, quite literally. I want you to choose an issue on campus about which you feel passionate. This might be adequate parking, the cost of tuition or fees, course selection, major requirements, discrimination, or housing, for example. If there's nothing on campus about which you're passionate, then choose an issue in your hometown *as long as you can research that issue*. While this project isn't due for some time, you'll need to choose a topic and start researching as soon as possible. This is a big project; please do not put it off until the last minute.

What is (I hope) exciting about this project is the fact that not only is it something you're interested in, it's something that you might actually be able to help change, because for this project you'll find the actual audience to which your proposal should be addressed. This, my friends, is part of your research. In other words, I do not know who your audience should be. That's something that you'll need to find out. Don't like the parking situation on campus? You'll need to find out who actually has the power to make a policy change. You'll also need to research the issue and topic itself, the conversation surrounding it, the proposals that already exist, and the cultural logics behind those proposals. You'll then need to deliberate, taking into account all of your research, and then write a proposal *that you'll send to the proper audience*. There will be numerous writing projects that you'll need to complete during the course of your research and writing. They are outlined below. Writing deadlines are going to come quickly. I strongly recommend that you begin writing as soon as possible and revise often.

**Initial project proposal:** For your initial proposal you'll need to write a minimum one page (double spaced) explanation of what topic you've chosen, why you've chosen that topic, what you already know about the topic, any research you've already done, what questions you have about the issue, and what problems you anticipate in your research. This initial proposal must be submitted to me by class time on Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Informal project presentation:** For those of you uncomfortable speaking in public, don't panic. This is good practice in a safe environment. For this portion of the project, you'll give an informal presentation. What do I mean by informal? You don't have to dress up. You don't even have to stand up. You don't have to leave your seat. I do expect you to be prepared, however, to talk for 3-5 minutes about the campus issue that you've chosen, why you're interested in it, what you already know, what research you've found, and what questions you have. If you're *not* presenting, it is your job to provide any information or resources that you may have to the person presenting. These informal presentations will take place on March 7<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. If you present on the 19<sup>th</sup>, I expect you to have more information than if you present on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Issue Report:** For this portion of the project you'll need to turn in what amounts to a summary of the issue itself. You'll summarize the major issues that you've identified, the stakeholders in this discussion, and the different positions that they hold. In other words, what's the problem here? You're not really making an explicit argument, analyzing the issues, or proposing any solutions at this point. Here you're just laying out the issue itself. This should be at least three double spaced pages. Final draft due Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Audience Identification:** You need to do your research to identify the appropriate audience for your final proposal. This means that you'll need to find out who can actually make the changes

that you propose. You'll need to write a brief paragraph identifying this person or committee, explaining why this is the appropriate audience, and explaining what you know about this audience. Due Monday, March 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Issue Analysis:** For this portion of the project, it's your job to understand the debate or dialogue surrounding the issue that you've chosen. This is not to say that you need to choose a side. Instead, you'll need to research all sides of this issue. Do not assume there are two sides to every issue. Usually, there are *many* sides to an issue. Again, I'm not looking for you to *enter* this debate, but to research and fully understand it. In other words, you're not making an argument *about* the issue. Instead, you're researching and then explaining the nuances of this debate. You'll discuss why the issue has not yet been resolved based on what you learn about the cultural logics and positionalities of the stakeholders. You'll also need to analyze what each major stakeholder actually wants or needs in order for this debate to be resolved.

I'm asking you here to practice what Krista Ratcliffe calls "rhetorical listening." That means that you'll research and listen to all sides of the debate. But you'll listen not to agree or disagree; instead, you'll listen to better understand. In order to do this, you'll need not only to better understand the issue itself, and the viewpoints of those involved in this debate, but you'll also need to try to understand the "cultural logics" of all sides. Remember that cultural logics are defined as, "A belief system or way of reasoning that is shared within a culture" (Ratcliffe 10). So, as Ratcliffe explains, "even though not all Green party members think exactly alike, certain tenets associated with the Green party form a recognizable Green cultural logic" (10). What, then, are the cultural belief systems from which each side seems to be operating? How do you know? This will help you explain, *why*, in your opinion, this debate continues. You'll want to take into consideration the claims, grounds, and warrants; the values and cultural logics; and the different positionalities that are influencing the argument.

Your issue analysis will be a minimum of 5 (full) double spaced pages. You'll need to do significant outside research in order to successfully complete this assignment. You'll probably find a good amount of information on campus websites, but you might also consider setting up interviews with relevant people. Remember that you should call *at least* one week in advance to set up an interview, you'll need to explain your project, and you should come dressed professionally and have questions prepared. Remember, also, that no one is required to allow you an interview. As for Internet sources, remember to always evaluate your sources and the information you find there (this is, of course, true of *all* sources, not just Internet). The final draft of this assignment is due Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Deliberation:** Given all that you know about the topic, the issue, the stakeholders, the debate/conversation, the problems, and the proposals, write up a deliberation in which you first briefly summarize the issue and the debate/conversation and then propose your own solution. Remember that this is a persuasive document; you're making an argument. You'll need, then, to include evidence that supports your own proposal. You'll also need to clearly explain why this proposal is the best possible solution. If you believe that the best solution has already been proposed by someone else, then explain why this is the best solution and deserves our support. This should be at least three full double spaced pages. Final draft due Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Proposal:** This is the actual document that you'll be sending to the appropriate audience. Your proposal should very briefly summarize the issue, briefly list the proposals already being considered, and then propose your solution and the reasons for it (or your support for one proposal and the reasons you support it). It should be no more than two full pages and no less

than one full page and needs to be in the appropriate format (most likely either a business letter or a letter to the editor). You'll need to think very carefully about your audience here. What sort of language do you need to use in order to persuade your audience? What sort of appeals should you include? What evidence is most persuasive to this particular audience? This is a brief document, so you'll need to choose carefully. You'll also need to make sure your proposal is well-written, clearly organized, and impeccably proofread. There is little less persuasive than typos and errors. You'll need to submit your final proposal in a properly addressed **unsealed** envelope by class time on Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. You must also submit a copy of your proposal to me using the digital dropbox by 2:40. Final draft due April 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Project Proposal Post & Comment:** Because we won't be having class on Monday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, I'll need you to workshop your proposals outside of class. In order to do this, I'm asking you to post your proposal on the course discussion board. In the "comments" section, please explain your purpose and your audience. Then, you'll need to read two of your classmates' proposals and provide a minimum one-page (double spaced) response to each proposal. You'll post this as a "reply." You must reply to at least two proposals and you only get credit for the first two responses to any proposal *even if you post at the same time as the second responder*. Responses should NOT focus on editing, although you might comment on that. Instead, focus on whether or not the proposal seems persuasive (and why or why not – be specific), what evidence is most persuasive and least persuasive and why, what evidence might be lacking, whether or not the writer has chosen an appropriate voice for the audience, whether or not the writer has considered the opposition, and any organizational or focus issues that you notice. You need to post by 2:40 on Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. You need to post comments on blackboard by 2:40 on Monday, April 16<sup>th</sup>.

# **Consent Form For Participation in a Research Study**

## **TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY**

The title of my study is "Feminist Rhetorical Theory and Pedagogy."

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this research is to understand the ways in which including feminist rhetorics in a class may or may not change the way that the class must be taught. Throughout the course of the semester, we'll be discussing different definitions of rhetoric, including various definitions of feminist rhetoric. But in short, feminist rhetorics might be defined as rhetorics that draw attention to the way that gender may or may not influence the uses of rhetoric. Feminist rhetorics often do not function using an either/or binary, but instead contribute to a broader understanding of what persuasion is or might be, how to persuade effectively, as well as when persuasion may or may not be appropriate.

## **WHAT DOES YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY INVOLVE?**

Your participation in this study involves completing a questionnaire at the end of the course. I will not see the completed questionnaires until after I have turned in final grades. I will also keep copies of all writing assignments (formal and informal) that are produced in this course. I will ask for your permission to discuss or excerpt from these writings and the questionnaires in my study or subsequent publications. If I decide to use your work in my project, I might contact you to ask you follow-up questions about your writing or your comments. I might also offer you the opportunity to comment on the sections of my dissertation that pertain to your work or this class.

## **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will have no effect on your grade in this class or on your academic record.

## **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

These rhetorics will result in an effective persuasive writing course, as you will be exposed to a wide range of persuasive techniques. Additionally, participation in this study will give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences in English 503 and express your opinions of the class.

## **IF YOU CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY, WILL IT COST YOU ANYTHING?**

There will be no cost for participating in this study.

## **WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

## **WHAT OTHER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You understand that your consent to participate in this research is entirely voluntary, and that your refusal to participate will involve no prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. You can, at any

time, decide to not give me permission to discuss or use excerpts of your writing assignments in my research or publications.

**CAN YOU WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?**

Yes. You can, at any time while taking this course, decide to withdraw your permission to use your writing in my study and/or decline to complete the end of semester questionnaire and/or interview without penalty to your grade or academic record, without penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

**HOW WILL THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF YOUR RECORDS BE PROTECTED?**

The researcher seeks to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. In order to do so, pseudonyms ("fake names") will be used in the discussion and/or publication of this study. Completed questionnaires will be kept in a password protected database. The researcher will be the only one with access to the data.

You should understand, however, there are rare instances when the researcher is required to share personally-identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, officials at the University of New Hampshire, designees of the sponsor(s), and/or regulatory and oversight government agencies may access research data.

**WHOM TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY**

If you have any questions pertaining to the research you can contact Abby Knoblauch at [abbyk401@hotmail.com](mailto:abbyk401@hotmail.com) to discuss them.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you can contact Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research, 603-862-2003 or [Julie.simpson@unh.edu](mailto:Julie.simpson@unh.edu) to discuss them.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read this form and CONSENT/AGREE to  
(print name clearly)

participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

<sup>i</sup> Specific readings and assignment titles changed each semester, but the questions themselves remained the same.





UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

December 15, 2005

Alison A. Knoblauch  
English, Hamilton Smith  
283R Mast Road Ext.  
Durham, NH 03824

**IRB #:** 3569  
**Study:** Feminist Rhetorical Theory and Pedagogy  
**Approval Date:** 12/15/2005

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/IRB.html>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed pink Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or [Julie.simpson@unh.edu](mailto:Julie.simpson@unh.edu). Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson  
Manager

cc: File  
Jessica Enoch